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fallen under the wheel."—*Bazaroff in Turyeneff's "Fathers and Sons."*

UNDER THE WHEEL,

A MODERN PLAY IN SIX SCENES.

By HAMLIN GARLAND.

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PRICE 25 CENTS.

BOSTON, MASS:
THE BARTA PRESS, 148 HIGH STREET.
1890.

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For out of olde feldes as men seith
Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere
And out of olde bokes in good feith
Cometh al this newe science that men lere

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THERE is a phrase current among western horsemen which always had a deeply pathetic meaning to me.—"That horse, sir, will go till he goes under the wheel." Or one man will say to another in a boast, "My bay can put your sorrel under the wheel," meaning in each case that a fine high-spirited horse will travel till he drops dead in the harness. With this in my mind I wondered if Bazaroff, Turgeneff's hero, had not some such dim picture in his mind when he muttered, "All is over. I have fallen under the wheel." As for the body of the play, it aims to present first of all a picture of certain phases of American life, and secondarily a problem, because no section of life, carefully considered, fails to present phases of shortcomings, injustices, and sufferings calculated to make the thoughtful man fall into deep thought.

For eight years I have been growing steadily in the belief that I have heard the riddle of the sphinx answered, not by one voice but by many. I have very definite beliefs as to the line of remedial action but I do not insist on the infallibility of my belief. I simply say I am satisfied that the destruction of all monopoly in land by a single governmental levy upon the social or site-value of land is the heroic cure for most — if not all — of the disease and deformity of our social life.

This I have suggested in my play and occasionally in my stories, never I hope to the great injury of their literary value. I have also aimed at setting forth in a modest way the growing desire of the modern woman to stand as an individual beside man. Alice Edwards, in a dim, searching way, is walking toward the light, as I see her. In rejecting charity and demanding justice she is voicing the expanding personality of the modern man and woman.

I should be very glad to hear from those to whom the story of Jason Edwards and his daughter comes with new meaning, or as a new statement.

HAMLIN GARLAND,
No. 7 Beacon Street.

434491

UNDER THE WHEEL.

A Modern Play in Six Scenes

BY HAMLIN GARLAND.

"I have fallen under the wheel."—*Bazarof in Turgeneff's "Fathers and Sons."*

Scene First.—A Mechanic's Tenement.
Scene Second.—A Boomer's Den.
Scene Third.—A Mid-day Prairie.
Scene Fourth.—A Settler's Harvest.
Scene Fifth.—A Game of Quoits.
Scene Sixth.—A Charity Bed.

Persons Represented:

Jason Edwards, *Mechanic.*
Mrs. Edwards.
Alice Edwards.
Little Linnie (*nine*).
Walter Reeves, *On the Daily Events.*
Mrs. Murtagh.
Julian Bergh.
Hank Whiting, *Proprietor Western House.*
Frank Graham, *Wamburger Grocery.*
Johnson, "*Farmin' it.*"
Daddy Ruble, *Speculator.*
E. B. Elliot.
Tonguey Tom, Blacksmith, and others.
Judge Balser, *Land Agent, Attorney, Boomer.*

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Scene First.—A Mechanic's Tenement.

A square room, carpeted with a cheap carpet; door back, looking into hall; worn cane-seat chairs standing about; table in centre, scantily spread; sofa right front; piano right back; bureau left back; small table left front, covered with books. Everything indicates that this is general living room, dining and sitting room. The roar of the street and the shrill clamor of children enter the room. It is about five o'clock, and very hot. Linnie is drumming on the piano. Mrs. Edwards is coming and going wearily, her face is sweet, but worn and apathetic.

Mrs. E. "Linnie."

Linnie (*jumping from the stool*). "What, momma?"

Mrs. E. "You didn't put on the cups and saucers."

(*Linnie flies out into the kitchen. Mrs. Edwards drops into a chair wearily, and putting her hands to her head sighs deeply,* "Oh, dear!")

Linnie (*returning and arranging cups*). "Didn't Allie look lovely, momma, sitting up there before all those people? I wish I was a graduate so I could sing and wear a white dress."

Mrs. E. (*rising slowly*). "Be patient, child, an' mebbe you will be. If father has good luck you can go to the conservatory. Mebbe we won't always be s' poor."

Linnie. "What makes so many people poor, momma?"

Mrs. E. "Oh, I don't know, child. Ask Mr. Reeves; he's an editor, and ought t' know. I don't know."

(*Boy peeps in the door, throws himself into an attitude of pitching a ball.*) "Hi, there! Git onto me curves!"

Linnie. "Oh, let me see! Where 'd y' get it, Teddy?"

Teddy. "I found it — bought it, I mean."

Linnie. "Found it! Where?" (*Teddy hesitates.*) "O Teddy!"

Teddy (*reproachfully*). "Well, what's a feller t' do wen Brooters bangs a high foul over de fence square up agin y'r leg? Look out fer me razzle-dazzle now! Get onto me snake now, Clarkson's in de box! Now see me pitch a side-drop. Oh, dat's de ball dat razzle-dazzles de coon wid de stick!" (*Pantomime of throwing.*)

Linnie (*looking on with interest*). "I'll bet I can do it. Let me try."

Teddy. "I've got 'a' go home in a minnit, but I'll give yeh a pointer or two."

(*As they talk in the corner Mrs. Murtagh, a middle-aged Irish-woman with pleasant face, enters with a dish in her hand. As she talks Mrs. E. keeps about her work, causing the visitor to raise and lower her voice alternately.*)

Mrs. Murtagh. "Arrah! And have ye haird the noos? Timmy Sheehan has broken the hid ov Mike O'Lary f'r darin' t' chpake ill ov Mary McGrill. The more honor to him! and Mrs. O'Hoolihan's old man caam home full o' paches, wild as an injin — and oh! the cirrcus they had wud raise the hairs of ye! — y' should be on me side o' the house. Y'd ha' thought the bloody fiends o' hell wor havin' a free fight. It's a foine woman is Mrs. O'Hoolihan, an' her arms are beautiful wid mooscle; the divil a mon c'n walk over *her* hid —"

Mrs. Edwards. "Sh! Don't talk of that, I don't like to have Linnie hear it. She hears too much now."

Mrs. M. (*lowering her voice*). "It's little she moinds what oim a-sayin,' wid Teddy tachin' her some o' his schmart tricks. He takes after his father, does Teddy." (*With adroit turn to flattery.*) "But it's a blissid home y' have here sure, wid four swate little rooms on the second floight front. An' think o' me jist, wid six childer an' three rooms three floights back! It's a lucky woman ye air so ye air, Mrs. Edwards."

Mrs. Edwards. "Yes, I 'spose I be, compared with others; but my home aint what I wish it was."

Mrs. M. "Not what ye wish it was! *What'll* ye be wantin' — the airth?"

Mrs. E. (*musing a moment at the table*). "Yes, that's just it.

It is the earth I'm wantin'. I want 'o live where they's a place for my children to play. Seems 's if I never *could* get reconciled to their playin' in the streets. I want a little yard with apple-trees in it and a pear-tree, and—and—a—home — this aint a home, it's only a stopping-place."

Mrs. M. "Glory be to God. Whin ye git that y'll be wid the saints! Be gorry, the loikes o' *that* 'll nivir come t' the loikes av us. But would ye lind me the loan av a cuup o' tay? It's out o' tay I am and me nairves in *that* state! And the childer *that* crazy." (*A crash on the stairs and screams of babe. Mrs. Murtagh rushes to the door and yells like a fog horn.*) "Phwat air ye doin' up there? Gaw back in the room wid ye! If ye dhrop the babby over the bannister again I'll baste the skin av ye! Teddy, run up an' see phawt the spalpane Patsey is doin'." (*Teddy pays no heed.*) (*Coming back to the centre calmly taking up her palaver.*)

"As I was sayin', ye've been s' kind to a poor—" (*At this point she sees Alice Edwards entering with Walter Reeves and scuttles into kitchen left, looks out with a comical leer, slowly closing the door. Alice is a girl of twenty with a thoughtful face; she is dressed in a light-colored modish dress. She enters the room and turns, smiling faintly at Reeves who is talking to someone in the hall. Reeves is a handsome, alert man of thirty, dressed richly. His hair is pushed straight up from his forehead; he has a quizzical look about his eyes.*)

Reeves (*still looking into hall*). "Pat, none o' y'r grinnin' now. It's the divil's own time I'd be havin' wid yez if y' lave anither banany-skin on the stairway." (*Entering he takes Teddy by the nape of the neck.*) "Two's company, Teddy, three's a crowd."

Teddy (*rebelliously*). "W'y don't y' put *her* out?" (*pointing at Linnie.*)

Linnie. "O Teddy Murtagh. I guess—"

Reeves. "No words — Teddy —no recriminations. Run along — I think I smell y'r supper waitin' fer yeh —"

Linnie (*who has whispered to Alice*). "Oh, I'll go meet papa." (*Runs out back.*)

Reeves to Alice. "Eh, well! Privacy and tenement houses are mutually destructive terms. As a prying newspaper man, I'm getting a dose of my own medicine. They all take a great interest in my affairs."

(*Alice smiles but faintly at his fun. She remains seated, eyes held down in thought.*)

Reeves (*sinking into a chair*). "Another graduation recital would lay me out in the morgue. That tall girl who punished Schumann — well, let that pass and come back to the matter in hand. That's all you'll promise me, is it?"

Alice (*very gravely*). "Yes."

Reeves. "To marry me — sometime!"

Alice (*smiling a little*). "Aint that enough?"

Reeves (*rising*). "No. It's too indefinite. Enough, to a man who wants you and the earth! Now just think how indefinite that sounds — sometime! Why not put a mete and a bound to it! Why not say next Fourth of July?" (*She smiles and shakes her head.*) "Thanksgiving?" (*She shakes head less emphatically.*) "Christmas? Ah! now I'm getting at it. Say a year from to-day. Now that's a tremendous sacrifice on my part. Come now!"

Alice (*smiling*). "Well, I — will — "

Reeves (*leaping up*). "Good!"

Alice (*thrusting him back*). "— think of it."

Reeves. "What's that?"

Alice. "I said I'd think of it."

Reeves (*turning wildly away*). "Nothing of the kind! Alice, you are wildly exasperating. To think of the sermons, recitals, and graduating elocutionists I've listened to, to hear you sing! To think of the ice-cream sodas — "

Alice (*warningly*). "Walter!"

Reeves (*sinking down into a chair*). "All diss haff I endured mit a batient shrug — only for this, only for this!" (*Groans, hides face.*)

Alice (*sternly*). "How can you make light of it!"

Reeves (*looking up*). "Make light of it! Do I look like a man making light of anything?" (*Becoming grave.*) "Alice, this is nonsense. Just look at it from my standpoint a moment. Here I am, good salary, a little land and railway stock — eye on a dove of a cottage in Meadow-view, Queen Anne, piazza all the way round — "

Alice. "I know — but — "

Reeves. "But what?"

Alice (*smiling*). "I'm happy now — "

Reeves (*dolorously*). "But I aint."

Alice. "I have my music, and father, and mother, and Linnie. Don't ask too much of me. Why can't you be patient?"

Reeves. "I am. Job aint a circumstance to me."

Alice (*with enthusiasm*). "I love my music; I can't stop now just when I am beginning to master it. I must succeed in that first. I want to show people that I can earn my own living — "

Reeves (*earnestly*). "Dearest girl, all I have is thine!"

Alice (*firmly*). "No, it aint. I want money all my own. I want to lift my people out of this — Oh, wouldn't it be glorious?

That's what I've worked for — dreamed about! I can't give it up now— "

Reeves. "Oh, these modern women! Oh, for the soft and yielding heroine of romance!"

Alice (*going on*). "You got your place by your own work; I want to show how much I can do."

Reeves. "You mean how little."

Alice (*stamping her foot*). "I mean how much! I'm proud of you because you got your place by merit; I'm going to see if I can't do something — "

Reeves (*secretly admiring her*). "Nonsense! I can do work enough for two. I don't want you to work — "

Alice. "I know you don't, but— "

Reeves. "But what?"

Alice. "I want to work. Can't you wait? Let me have my freedom another year to see what I can do."

Reeves (*a little nettled*). "Freedom! Come, now, that's going too far. As if you couldn't do just as you please after marrying me!"

Alice (*eluding him*). "I'm not so sure about that! Don't you remember calling me the modern woman a few moments ago?"

Reeves (*surprised at her turn*). "Yes."

Alice (*with returning archness*). "Well, the modern woman doesn't marry young."

Reeves. "The modern woman better look out or she'll get out o' the habit and not marry at all! Say, Alice, do you know I'm getting old? I am, too near thirty, altogether. Come and look at my hair — gray, eh?"

Alice (*pushing her hand through his hair*). "Gray! There isn't a gray hair in it — and if — "

Reeves. "And if there was, it would be due to dissipation. Oh, that's what you were going to say! Now that's — "

Alice (*protesting*). "No, no! I didn't mean that— I meant— "

Reeves. "Oh, you can't switch off onto Back-Bay parties and summer hotels; but there is something in these five o'clock receptions — the tea I *know* is wearing on me. But come back to the matter in hand."

Alice (*freeing herself and going*). "Now I won't argue any more. You sit down and keep delightfully quiet."

Reeves. "But hold on. I — "

Alice (*hangs up her hat and sits at piano. Drowns out his voice, and then asks demurely*), "What were you about saying, Walter?"

Reeves (*savagely*). "I was merely remarking that I'll go home and write a ferocious article on the modern woman."

Alice (sweetly). "Do, and I'll add another year to your probation. The tyrant man must be taught his real weakness. Woman is becoming his equal, nay, his conqueror!"

Reeves (in mock despair). "Oh, that I was born so late!"

(*As she plays softly he rises and goes over to her and puts his hand on her shoulder. When she ceases playing he says in a new tone of voice,*) — "Lovers always enjoy telling each other what they thought and felt the first time they met —"

Alice (looking up). "Yes, go on."

Reeves. "I never could tell what I thought when I saw you first — I met you on the street, you remember — "

Alice. "I remember."

Reeves. "But I clipped a little poem to-day, that comes as near expressing my thought as anything can."

Alice. "Oh, read it! Won't you, please?"

Reeves. "How do you know it's complimentary?"

Alice. "I don't."

Reeves (smiling). "Yes, you do, or you wouldn't plead for it. Well, it went something like this — if my memory serves: —

She passed me on the street
And saw me not!
As some sweet singer, far
From its swaying nest
Beside some half-hid stream
Deep in the wooded west,
Musing she moved with eyes
Upon some other far-off skies.

Knowing not vice, nor hunger's ways,
With pure, unthinking, child-like eyes,
She passed me, but I caught
The glorious beauty of her face!
Beneath her garments, perfume fraught,
She moved with such a splendid grace
I thought a strain of music passed
And with its passing held me fast!

So purely pure her happy face,
So delicate each rounded limb,
So perfect was the line of grace
That swept from breast to dainty rim
Of swaying dress, no sculptor's dream
Of angelhood had half the spell
That in her living beauty lay —
She passed! And I, so eager-eyed —"

(*As Reeves repeats this poem to Alice, she keeps her eyes on the floor. As he hesitates on the last verse she takes his hand in hers, and lays her cheek on it. As he finishes she looks up and says:*)

"Did you — Oh, how you idealize me! If it were only true that we knew neither vice nor hunger! But there is no escaping —"

(*Knocking at the door, and enter Mrs. Murtagh, followed by Mrs. Edwards, who places a dish on the table.*)

Mrs. M. (*elaborately to Reeves*). "Good evenin', Mister Iditorr. Good evenin', Miss Edwards. It's a bloody thief I feel loike; but Murtagh 'll be waitin', an' waitin' makes him *that* angry. It's the divil's own task t' come bechune two swatehairts sittin' loike two dooves in a nist — "

Reeves. "There, never mind that."

Mrs. M. "Oh, it's not on me own account —"

Teddy (*putting his head in at the door*). "Six t' four in favor de Bostons, Clarkson in de box."

Reeves. "How's that?"

Teddy (*with certainty*). "You bet yer life when Clark. is in de points dey go out, *one, toe, tree.* He c'n make ol' Anson fan de air."

Reeves. "The modern boy."

Mrs. M. "He's the curse o' me loife. As I was — "

Alice (*quickly*). "There, there, Mrs. Murtagh, don't say anything more about it. I didn't know — "

Mrs. M. "Av coorse y' didn't, bless the swate two eyes av yeh! An' yer moother sayin' I'll knock on the dure. Dawn't do it, s'si. I know what it is to resave cal— "

Reeves (*sternly protesting*). "Madam, look —"

Mrs. M. "Didgy hear that, now? *Madam*, s's 'e! Good luck t' yeh f'r the same token —" (*Curtseys. Row outside.*)

Reeves. "Aint that Teddy howling?"

Mrs. M. (*listening an instant*). "Foightin' is he? Mother o' God! that b'y's the divil himsilf. Good luck t' the bawth o' ye. I'll dance at y'r weddin' till y'll think it's bechune sixteen an' twenty I am." (*Goes out hurriedly*).

Reeves (*with a sigh*). "Heavens and earth, what a scourge!"

Alice. "Oh, *she's* not bad. She's good at heart. But there *are* people in our block who are dreadful, and it is so hard to escape them in the city, where human life presses so hard."

Reeves (*tenderly*). "My poor little girl, what a life for you! Why *will* you not let me take you out of it?"

Alice (*with significant gravity*). "*And leave my people in it?* Oh, wouldn't it be glorious if I could get a place to sing! If I go through the course, my teacher says —"

Reeves (*with a despairing sigh*). "There she goes again! Well, I must go back to the office. You're a modern woman with a vengeance."

Mrs. E. (*coming forward*). "Won't you stay t' supper? Jason 'll be glad —"

Reeves. "No, thank you, I've got a little work at the office, and then I've to go out and report an anti-poverty meeting at the Temple. Special job."

Alice. "What kind of a meeting is that, for pity's sake?"

Reeves (*preparing to go*). "Oh, a cranky kind. Henry George started it. Some absurd idea about abolishing poverty."

Alice (*with a profound sigh*). "I wish it wasn't so absurd. I don't see why poverty is so persistent in this age of invention."

Reeves (*as if struck by her words*). "Come to think of it, it is more absurd to think the abolition of poverty absurd. Why shouldn't it be abolished? What's the good of progress if it doesn't abolish it?" (*He muses.*) "*I* don't see where the laugh comes in myself. Do you know, I've been thinking and writing on these things of late? I don't know why; it's in the air, I guess. Everybody's got some cure." (*Leans his elbow on a chair, speaks in slow, deep, musing voice.*) "I stood on the Brooklyn bridge the other day and looked down on New York. Over me soared and sung those stupendous cables, the marvel of man's skill, etched on the sky, delicate as a spider's web. I stood there looking down at the sea of grimy roofs, a lava-like, hideous flood of brick and mortar, cracked, and seamed, and monstrous for its lack of line or touch of beauty, a modern city. I saw men running to and fro like ants, lost in the tumult of life and death struggle. I saw pale girls sewing there in dens reeking with pestilence. I saw myriads of homes where the children could play only in the street or on the sooty roof, colonies of hopeless settlers sixty feet from their mother earth. And over me soared the bridge to testify to the inventive genius of man. And I said then what I say now, that men have invented a thousand ways of producing wealth, but not one for properly distributing it. I don't know where the trouble is. If we once knew the trouble, somebody'd find a cure. Abolition of poverty." (*He muses a moment, then starts.*) "Well, good-by, I'll write this up in a leader." (*With a return to his cheerful manner, takes her hand, makes an elaborate obeisance.*) "I await your pleasure. Farewell, my queen." (*Goes out without looking back.*)

Alice (*looks after him smilingly. As she comes back the smile fades from her face*).

"Isn't it terrible to be poor, mother?"

Mrs. E. (*with quiet pathos*). "Yes, dear; but I've kind o' got used to it. I don't look f'r anything else now. I don't care s' much f'r m'self, but I'd like t' see my children safe from it."

Alice (*seated, with bent head*). "Oh, how sweet it must be to be free from the fear of poverty! To feel that you don't need to scrimp and pinch, and turn dresses and dye feathers, and wear old shoes; to feel that food will come when you need it; to have the soul set free for art." (*Leaping up, her face aglow.*) "But I'll win yet, mother; I feel in my soul that I have the gift. I'll take you out of this—"

Mrs. M. (*entering, with a grin*). "Can y' loan me the lavin o' sugar? I have a cuup."

Mrs. E. (*takes the cup and goes to kitchen. Mrs. M. turns to Alice who is playing softly*). "A foine yoong mon thot. A rale mon if he does look a bit av a jewd. It maad me think o' the toime when Murtagh caam a-coortin' me — in the ould country— may the smile o' God fall on it! —an' a foine broth av a b'y was Murtagh, an' a rare loomp av a gurrul was misilf — axin' yer pardin — an' it's well I remember the green turrf, an' the coos, an' the pegs in the pin, an' the trees. Sorry the tree I've clapped me two eyes on since the day of Saint Patrick." (*To Mrs. E., with sugar*). "Thank ye, mum, glory t' God! y're a joowell. Be gob! and phwat is the world comin' to whin the half av us niver see the blissid soon rise 'r set; an' niver a blaad o' grass n'r a shavin o' mood f'r the childer t' roll on savin' the gutter, an' a cop on the corner waitin' t' braak y'r hid, 'r a ply-carrd sayin' kaape aff the grass. Faith! an' if this is free Amurriky, what'll be the Amurriky that'll be comin' wid the faall o' waages and the rise o' rint?"

Alice. "Why, Mrs. M., you're quite an orator. I didn't know you thought of these things."

Mrs. M. "Tought of 'm? Me! wid six childer an' Mike's waages cuut down t' tin dollars the wake? Who shud tink av thum?"

Alice. "But you're always so cheery —"

Mrs. M. "So I am! Fer what's the use wapin' over shpilt milk? Monny a mon shmiles wid a sore heart under the vist av 'im. Whin I tink av ould Oireland, the gem o' the say, an' the tousands and tins o' tousands driven out lavin' the ould father and moother alone in the turrf-hut it's shmilin' sure I'll be 'r wapin'—" (*lifts her apron to her eyes and goes out*).

Alice (*clasping her hands wildly*). "O mother, mother! Are there any happy people in the world — any happy working-people?"

Mrs. E. "It don't seem so now, dear. But when I was young, back t' Derry, seemed 's if everybuddy was forehanded; but now everybuddy is strugglin' f'r dear life —"

(*Enter Linnie from the hall, joyously.*) "Poppa's coming, poppa's coming."

(*Enter Jason Edwards, a middle-aged man in grimy clothing, a tin pail in his hands. His face is gloomy but he strives to hide it. As Linnie runs to him he takes her in his hands and raises her to his face.*) "Heigho, little one, look out f'r grease."

(*As he hangs up his coat and hat, she follows him about.*) "O poppa, just think, I made a cake t'day all alone! Mother didn't

help me hardly any, did y', mother? Aint I gettin' t' be quite a cook?"

Edwards (*rolling up his sleeves*). "Well, I should say so. I don't know what we'd do without our girls, do we, mother?"

Linnie. "And O poppa, Mr. Reeves was here. And when he went away he —"

Alice (*warningly*). "Linnie."

Edwards (*with assumed cheerfulness*). "Ho, ho! Now we're getting at it. Go on, I want to know what goes on when I'm away. They can't nuthin' go on in this ward without little Miss Brighteyes knowin' all about it." (*Goes out into kitchen.*)

Alice. "Linnie, dear, you need discipline."

Linnie. "What's discipline?"

Alice. "Horrors, what an inflection! Discipline is teaching little girls not to tell tales out o' school and not to talk like Teddy Murtagh." (*She goes out and returns with an apron, helps at table.*)

(*Edwards enters, wiping his face. While he is rolling down his sleeves, Linnie climbs into a chair and gets the comb out of the case under mirror.*)

Linnie. "I'm all ready, poppa. Sit down in the rocking-chair."

(*Edwards sits, takes her on his lap, clasping her around her waist while she talks.*)

"Aint you glad you've got someone t' comb your hair for you when you're tired?"

Edwards. "I guess I am. We'd surrender without our girls, wouldn't we, mother? But you're gettin' t' be such a great big girl now, I'm afraid I sha'n't have y' much longer." (*Edwards looks at Alice, meaningly.*)

Linnie. "I'm goin' t' sit on your lap till I'm big as Alice — yes, a good 'eal longer."

Edwards. "Oh, no, you'll be goin' off an gittin' married one o' these days, an' forgit y'r ol' daddy."

Linnie. "I won't neither! Now you stop talkin' that way. I aint *never* goin' t' get married."

Edwards (*rising*). "Don't be too sure of that! Well, Jennie, how goes it with you to-day? Seems turrible hot in here. I swear it's worse'n the shop."

Mrs. E. (*patiently*). "It always is, Jason, when the wind is in the southwest."

Edwards. "Why don't you open the door?"

Mrs. E. "I can't stand the noise and smell t'night, my head aches. Sometimes it seems 's if I couldn't bear it, but I think o' people who don't have as much as we do, an' so I keep a-goin'."

Edwards (*walking about*). "That's about the only way, t' be patient. It makes me wild sometimes." (*Goes to lounge and*

drops heavily upon it. Alice takes a fan from the wall and fans him, stoops and kisses him.)

Alice. "Poor papa — it's dreadful to see you come home so tired." (*Brushes the hair back from his forehead.*)

Edwards (*bitterly*). "It's just one eternal grind, not a day off. I'm glad I don't believe in another world — I wouldn't be sure o' rest after I got there."

Mrs. E. (*shocked*). "Why, Jason, what are you sayin'? You must 've hed a hard day in the shop. It's dretful hot f'r the first week in June."

Edwards (*raising to his elbow*). "First week in June! Why, mother, it's just thirty-two years next week since we was married. D' you remember how old Derry looked that day? Flowers, and berries, and daisies, an' birds, (*rising*) — why, mother, that was heaven an' we didn't know it! Down here in this cussed alley we don't know anything about June, only it makes our tenements hotter and sicklier. I s'pose the cows up there are knee-deep in the grass, and the wind smellin' like the front door o' heaven. We didn't look f'r this kind o' thing when we left Derry, did we? We didn't look forward to a tenement?"

Mrs. E. "No, Jason,— but set up an' eat sumpthin'."

Linnie. "Poppa, I wish we could go up in the *real* country this summer — you know you promised — "

Alice. "Sh! Linnie; papa will do his best."

Edwards (*going to the table*). "I'll try, little one, but I'm afraid there aint no vacation for us. The fight gets harder every year. Oh, I'm too tired to eat, Jennie. Well, Allie, how'd y' come out with your recital t' day?"

Alice (*putting her hand in his*). "Very well, father, only I wished you could have been there."

Edwards. "I wisht I could, but I can't. I got 'o keep goin'. Rent an' taxes go on when I picnic, but wages don't." (*Shoves back from the table and sits dejectedly.*)

Linnie (*starting up*). "O poppa, a man put a bill under our door that said *Rent* on it. I'll get it." (*Brings it from the corner, reads it slowly.*)

Linnie (*reading*).

Dear Sir: — At the expiration of your lease, July 1st, your rent will be increased five dollars per month. Please notify us if you intend to remain.

JOHN NORCROSS, *Agent.*

Edwards. "Good God! and my wages cut down last week. Haint they got no mercy, these human wolves? Haint I got all I can stand now? Look at it!" (*Looking at the walls.*) "Look at this tenement! Hotter, rottener, shabbier, but rent must go up. Jennie! Children! I don't know what I'm goin' t' do. I don't see any way out; I can see we're bein' crushed — "

Linnie (*going to him*). "Don't cry, poppa, don't mind him."

(*As Edwards sits thus with bowed head, Julian Berg, a pale, student-like German, enters at the door. He is accompanied by a full-bearded, sinister-looking man, who stands in the doorway, stolidly smoking a long pipe. Berg holds a rent bill.*)

Berg. "Aha! Vat say you now? Is it nodt dime doo brotest? Our vages is reduced dwice alretty in four years — te rendt haff been raist four dimes. How? It is hell, is it nodt? Vat you do?"

Edwards (*without looking up*). "I don't know."

Berg (*darkly, looking at Alice*). "I know vat I do. I magke brotest so I shall pe heardt. It is nodt doo be born wit. I giff in my name to-night." (*He starts toward the door.*)

Alice (*stopping him*). "Don't do that. Keep away from those Anarchists, Mr. Berg. They will hurt you. They don't belong here. Such meetings are wrong in a free country —"

Berg (*turning*). "Free? Free doo bay rendt in. I fly from de tyrandts ofe my native landt, I reach a free landt! Bah! I am only slave under anodder name, dat is all. De mardch of feudalism is here even. I say there is no free blace left. Ledt dem tage care, I shall fight. I am a volf ad bay. If I fall now, I trag someding wit me." (*He starts to go.*)

Alice (*stopping him*). "Don't go with those men. You're not yourself to-night. Stay with your mother."

Berg (*moved by her word and hand on his arm*). "For your sake, I vill stay. I am nodt vell. It is true."

Alice (*recoiling*). "No, no; not for my sake, but for your mother's sake."

Berg. "For *you* haff ask me I stay." (*He turns to the figure at the door.*) "You hear, I go nodt oud." (*Figure at the door goes.*) "I vish to dalk mit you — I haff—"

(*Alice stands speaking in a low voice to Berg. At last he nods.*) "I promise — ant I vill gome again soon?" (*Exit.*)

Alice (*turning to her father*). "Can't something be done — can't you strike?"

Edwards (*spiritlessly*). "No, we can't strike,— at least it wouldn't do any good."

Alice. "Why not?"

Edwards. "What can men do strikin' with families as I have needin' every dollar they c'n earn? Rents due an' no money t' pay it with. I don't know which way t' turn."

Mrs. E. "Don't give up, Jason. We'll git along some way. We can move into a cheaper tenement,— "

Edwards (*indignantly*). "I don't want y' to do that, Jennie. You're low enough; I've been hopin' t' move into a better one."

Alice (*resolutely*). "I'll give up my course at the Conservatory and go to teaching. I'll do my part."

Edwards. "It wouldn't save us, m' girl, for next year the rents would be higher an' wages lower. It aint the present that scares me, it's the *future!* I could pull through for a year or two if 'twant for the turrible uncertainty of the future. If I should be laid up f'r a month— I'm gettin' old an' liable t' be — I don' know what we'd all do. John jest about makes a livin' for his family — he can't help us. Linnie must go t' school, an' Alice *ought* to go on with her music — "

Alice (*firmly*). "No, father, I'll give up the Conservatory for the present. I'll find something to do, I'll be a help."

Linnie. "So'll I."

Edwards (*putting his arms around them*). "You're a help to me now, Allie; nothin' cheered me more all day long than the thought o' your havin' a good time with your musical friends."

(*Alice has a thoughtful look on her face. She is thinking of Reeves, and his question and her answer.*)

Mrs. E. (*with a sigh*). "What's the world comin' to, Jason, when hard-workin' people can't make a decent living?"

Edwards (*in the same gloomy tone*). "I don't know, Jennie. I tell ye I've done a pile o' thinkin' lately. I've looked at the whole matter fore and aft, and they haint no other way to it. It's a plain case o' rents goin' up an' wages goin' down. Ten men f'r every job — me gettin' old." (*A long pause.*)

Mrs. Edwards (*hesitatingly*). "We couldn't go back to Derry an' go to farmin' agin, could we? They say they's deserted farms there that can be bought — "

Edwards (*bitterly*). "*Why* are they deserted? B'cause people couldn't make a livin' off 'em. Can we do any better? If I was a young man — if you was young and the girls didn't need schoolin', they'd be jest one way out — the way out f'r so many b'fore us — I mean go west an' get free land and start agin."

Alice (*feeling her way*). "Why don't you go west now? We'll go with you. I'm sorry we're not boys, we'd be of more use." (*With growing conviction.*) "Of course that's the way out! Why didn't we think of that before, mother? Everybody is happy and successful that goes west — it's the refuge for all like us. Let's go this very summer! Maybe I can find a place to teach music out there."

Edwards (*rising and going to his coat*). "Wal, now you've said s' much, Allie, I'll own up I've ben thinkin' a good 'eal of it f'r some time. I've jest about wore these maps out lookin' at 'em. (*He spreads some railway maps out on the table, and they all look at them. He grows enthusiastic.*)

Edwards (*pointing*). "Now here's Boston, an' there's Chicago, an' you follow that black line away out there an' that's Boom-town an' free land. D'ye hear, mother? free land! The place we're all dreamin' about!"

Linnie. "What d' you mean by free land, poppa?"

Edwards (*raising his head*). "Where there aint no landlords an' no rents. Where there aint no rich n'r no poor. Where people don't live in holes like this. Where they raise such ears o' corn as that, and have farms like that" (*holds up two gay-colored posters*), "with cows, an' pigs, an' clover, an' brooks near by, full o' trout. Mother, I've been hungry f'r a farm all my life; let's try it agen, eh?"

Mrs. E. "Very well, Jason, if you think best."

Linnie (*dancing about*). "Oh, yes, let's! I'm tired of this old city, aint you, Alice?" (*Alice remains strangely silent now.*)

Edwards (*in growing enthusiasm*). "Wal, now, this is a way out of it. I didn't dare t' say anything about it f'r fear you'd all say no. We'll git a piece o' that free land — Ed Ruble is out there an' his father — you remember old Sam Ruble, Jennie — an' they crack the country up great! Of course we won't expect much the first year or two — we'll be satisfied with a log house. We'll build near a river somewhere —"

Alice (*coming out of her reverie*). "Oh, won't it be delicious to get back to the birds and bees, and trees and clouds!"

Mrs. E. (*catching the spirit*). "Yes, if our house aint very much it'll be ours. We can't never hope to have a home of our own here — but it'll take money 't git out there, an' we aint got much t' spare, Jason."

Edwards. "We'll manage somehow, now we've made up our minds. We'll have t' sell off our furniture; 't won't pay t' ship 'em way out there."

Alice (*ruefully*). "*Must* we do that, father? It'll seem horrible to sell our dear old things. They aint worth much in money. Can't we store them and —"

Edwards. "It's going to take every cent we c'n rake an' scrape t' git out there and get started, Allie."

Mrs. E. "Of course there aint no other way — don't bother your father, Alice. That ol' blue chiny set th't Captain Bascom give gran'mother 'll bring a hundred dollars — that man from Dawley's offered 's much."

Edwards (*pondering the map*). "There's the road leading to the West, to wealth, health, and freedom — hey, mother? Good-by to work in a shop! Good-by to rent! Good-by to the filth and noise of the tenement! We'll go west, where my girl [*seizing Linnie*] will grow up strong, and sweet as a wild rosebush. I feel as if a pile-driver had rolled off my neck."

Alice (smiling). "You look it, father. I haven't seen you so jolly in years — have you, mother?"

Linnie (with a poster in each hand, reads:) "Harvest ex — excursions. Go by the Albert Lea route. Free farms in the garden spot of the glorious West."

Edwards. "Mother, what was that old song you used to sing about going West? Something about 'O'er the hills an' prairies,' 'r sumthin' like that — buffalo and —"

(*Mrs. Edwards smiling, hums an old tune*).

Linnie. "Oh, I know, 'O'er the Hills in Legions.'"

(*Alice goes to the piano; they break out with the words:*) —

"Cheer up, brothers, as we go
O'er the mountains westward ho!
While herds of deer and buffalo furnish the cheer.
Then o'er the hills in legions, boys, fair freedom's star
Points to the sunset regions, boys, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Edwards flourishes a huge poster in one hand, holding Linnie with the other. Ends by winding poster round her neck. As they sing the second verse, Mrs. M. comes to the door back, and looks in, in wild surprise. Berg is also seen. As the chorus begins the curtain goes down.

If curtain rises again, discover them all seated around the table. Mrs. M., Berg, and all.

Curtain.

Scene Second. — A Boomer's Den.

Five years later. Boomtown, 1889.—July. Office of Judge Balser, Land-agent and Attorney-at-law. Small room, bare floor, plain plaster walls, with maps hung here and there. Three or four office chairs. A table in the centre littered with papers and ink. Door and two windows at back looking out on a bright, sunny, quiet street of small, battlemented wooden stores.

Judge, wearing a neat summer suit and a neat pearl-gray plug, is seated at *Right Front*, his feet on the desk of his bookcase. He is reading aloud and smoking. When he pauses the silence is profound.

Frank Graham, in his shirt-sleeves, wearing a neat dark-brown suit and a derby hat, is seated with his back to the Judge, looking out of the door, his feet on the table in the centre. He has wicker cuffs on his wrists and bright-colored armlets above his elbows.

Hank Whiting, also in his shirt-sleeves, has on a hickory shirt, without collar or vest, wide white hat. His feet are on the window-sill at left of door.

"*Tonguey*" *Tom*, similarly attired, is seated in the door-way.

Curtain rises.

Judge (reading). "'It is with sorrow therefore that we see the noble profession of journalism trampled in the mire by such vandal hoofs." (*Judge pausing and blowing a whiff of smoke.*) "Hoofs aint bad. 'By such vandal hoofs as those of the editor of the Belleplain *Argus*. Were we the only ones to suffer from the vile vituperations of the paltry poltroon and limitless liar'—"

Frank (without looking around). "Quite a Shakspearean touch there. Limitless liar is immense.'

Judge (proceeding). "Limitless liar and troglodyte as runs or rather *crawls*, the Belleplain *Argus*.'"

Frank (*listlessly*). "That aint bad. A new hand on the *Pulverizer*. Don't he pay his respects to us, the major, and the Boomtown *Daily Spike?*"

Judge (*yawning and laying down paper*). "That feller aint got any gall!"

Frank. "Who? Yanktown *Pulverizer?*"

Judge (*rising and removing his coat*). "No, the *Argus*. It says our boom is busted. Everything on the down grade. And that the railroad is buying largely and secretly in Belleplain."

Frank (*stretching and yawning*). "Well, it is purty slow these days."

Whiting. "We'll git there, Eli — after harvest."

Judge. "You bet. This is a sort of a breathing-spell — everybody letting go to get a better holt." (*Sits again.*)

Frank. "What I'm 'fraid of is that this light crop is goin' t' down a lot o' these fellers like John Boyle and Jason Edwards." (*in the drowsy pause a chicken cackles*) "Say, Judge, you'd better go wring the necks o' them chickens, they give the town dead away. They sound too pastoral. It takes the wire edge off your talk about street-cars to have a hen cackle in the weeds."

Whiting. "That wouldn't faze him. He'd swear she was in a coop."

Frank (*after a pause, during which the lazy chuckle of a loaded wagon and the buzz of flies on the windows are heard*). "Boyle is goin' t' fall into your jaw sure, Judge, and Edwards — "

Judge (*a little impatiently*). "Yes, I know. They're both cussin' the country, but what could they expect? Come out here expectin' t' find free land layin' around loose? A man can't start in a new country without money."

Frank (*significantly*). "Where can he start better?"

Judge (*wheeling about in his swivel chair*). "That's nothin' t' do with it. As I told Boyle when I sold him his land, you c'n take y'r choice, — go thirty miles from a railway and get that free land you've heard about, or give me ten dollars an acre f'r mine. He took mine. It was his own choice. Same way with Edwards. A man ought 'o stand by himself "

Frank (*musingly*). "A man once jumped of his own choice into the sea—only the steamer was on fire—that's all. It was his choice."

Whiting. "Nasby Blume says the girl gits a pile o' letters from a feller in Boston. Nothin' like bein' postmaster t' find out such things. Nasby says the letters kind o' fell off — "

Judge (*busy at desk*). "Has the girl's dude ever been out?"

Frank. "I think he has once or twice, but I didn't see him; drove over from Belleplain, I guess — Hullo! What's this? Keep quiet — sh!"

(*Uncle Johnson meeting Daddy Ruble just outside the door.*

As they shake hands and talk, the Judge sits at desk and writes. Frank and Whiting wink at each other and listen. Johnson is a tall man, dressed like a farmer. Ruble wears a seedy suit and a "plug" hat.)

Uncle Johnson (with a jug in his hand and a rake on his shoulder). "How air ye, Daddy? How's this f'r high?"

Daddy (in a high key). "Purty high, how's the craps?"

Johnson (putting down jug and rake). "Purty dry, purty dry. Dry an' hot." (*Mops his face.*)

Ruble. "Purty tuff on the farmers."

Johnson (as they seat themselves on a bench, on the sidewalk under the window through which their heads show). "Spaicially with sugar-trusts puttin' sugar up, and Coal-Kings reggelatin' the price o' coal. This admin'stration—"

Daddy Ruble (in a high key). "Now go on! Lay the weather to the admin'stration. *Course* it's the fault of the admin'stration! *Everything* kin be laid to the admin'stration."

Johnson (wagging his head violently). "Well, it'd help us t' pull through if the admin'stration would let sugar come in free, an' wool —"

Ruble (rising). "Oh, go on, go on!"

Johnson (sarcastically). "Oh, I'm goin' on; don't you worry! We was all goin' to see a big boom when this —"

Ruble (hotly). "You'd lay the hot wind to the administration if you could, you ol' fool."

Johnson (more coolly). "Set down, set down, an' don't tear your shirt. You'll live jest as long." (*They sit.*)

Frank (laughing silently at Whiting). "See them two ol' seeds! They think they run Congress, and they don't neither of 'em know Jackson's dead. Now watch 'em, they'll fight sure. Now listen — Johnson'll wind Ruble up, like a watch. Now let her go, Gallagher! They're at it!"

Johnson's voice (rising out of the murmur which has been going on during Frank's talk). "What I'm a-sayin' is this. We don't get no protection on our wheat an' too dum much on our sugar. I don't believe in taxin' the many fur the few."

Ruble (shaking his trembling fist). "Shut up, you old copper-head! You're in f'r free-trade, I c'n see —"

Johnson (sternly). "Set down, you ol' fool, an' talk sense! When I corner yeh, y' alwiz go off —"

Ruble (still frantic). "I aint a-goin' off. Yeh can't corner nawthin'. I'm goin' t' stay right here."

(*Frank and Whiting laugh silently but mightily. Ruble and Johnson argue in dumb show, gesticulating violently.*)

Frank (to the others). "Now listen. He's goin' to rip the old man up the back. See his little game? He always does."

Johnson. "Did you make it worth that money? Did you do anything to them lots? Aint you reapin' where you aint sowed, you infernal ol' sponge?"

Ruble (excitedly raising his cane). "Don't you call me a sponge, you old blag'ard."

(*Frank going to the door to stop them.*)

Johnson. "I'll call you a sponge all I'm a-min' to, jest as long as you live off somebody else, an' if I don't double the taxes on you speculators, call me a horse. I'll make you use'r sell, one o' the six."

Ruble (wild with rage). "You're a dummed ol' single tax crank."

Johnson. "Well, that's what I am, an' I'll wind up you speculators 'r die a-tryin', as the fella says. You can't set around here on your pants and git rich out of—"

(*Ruble makes as if to strike him, Frank goes to the door.*)

Frank. "Hold on there! No fighting allowed on the grounds. Daddy, if you can't keep your whipple-tree off the wheel, don't kick out at the dashboard. Gentlemen, both, allow me to inform you that General Jackson is dead and that the cruel war is over. In the words of our great General 'Let us have peace.'"

(*As Johnson turns to go he slyly swings the rake's tail around and knocks Ruble's plug hat off, then scrambles away out of sight. This causes a general shout, at the close is heard a penetrating peal of laughter, followed by others in rhythms like the drumming of a pheasant, an irresistible chorus.*)

Frank. "Hello! Happy Elliot is in town. Been kind o' hungry f'r his laff f'r a week. Here he comes."

Enter Elliot (a fat man with a red face. Appears at the door where he puts his hands on the sides of the door and laughs).

Frank. "Hello, you old porpus. How do you stand the heat?"

Elliot (putting his thumbs in arm-holes of vest). "Poorty nigh unsodders me." (*Laughs.*) "Hello, Judge! Judge allays looks t' me like a red-headed slick-bellied ol' spider waitin' f'r flies." (*Laughs.*) "Oh, see that linen collar!"

Frank (looking out the window). "Sweat some, these days?"

Elliot. "'Bout enough t' keep me from season-checking."

Frank. "How d'ye feel anyhow?"

Elliot. "All broke up by the hot wave on my wheat."

Judge (elegantly smoking). "You look it."

Elliot (admiringly). "Aint he a daisy, a tulip? While Edwards and the rest of us are worried about to death over our crops, the Judge sets here cool as a toad in a cellar, an' harvests his mortgages slick 's a cat can lick her ear."

Judge. "Foresight! Nothin' like bein' on the ground first."

Elliot (*to Frank*). "Has he got a heart?"

Frank. "Who? Judge? Na-a-w! His heart's only a little hydraulic ram." (*Whiting and Elliot laugh. Judge goes on writing.*) "Set down, set down, live as long."

Elliot. "Wal, this won't do f'r me. I must go and look after my crop—I mean the Judge's crop. See yeh later." (*Exit.*)

Whiting. "That's right, get a move on yeh. Elliot sheds trouble like punkins off a hay-stack."

Frank. "His laugh 's as good as a brass-band; everybody's got 'o keep step." (*Begins to sing.*)

"There's a boomin' ol' boomer
On the lake below,
Oh, how I long to see that day;
Up to his neck in the brimstone flood—"

(*Breaks off looks out the window .*) "Great Cæsar's ghost!"

Judge and Whiting ask languidly. "Dog-fight?"

Frank. "A plug hat—"

Judge and Whiting (*in great excitement*). "What! what! what! what!"

Frank. "Tailor-made suit."

Judge. "No!"

Frank. "Yes."

Judge. "No; it can't be."

Frank. "I say yes."

Judge. "Where, for heaven's sake!"

Frank. "Coming up the street! Coming here!"

(*They crowd over one another to look out the window without being seen.*)

The Judge (*devoutly*). "Thank heaven!"

(*As the rest seat themselves the Judge goes to a big book and studies in it intently. As Walter Reeves enters Judge turns to Frank, saying, as if continuing a conversation:*) "No, Graham, I can't let you have that lot for any such figger. Why, it's worth a thousand dollars if it's worth a cent." (*Nods carelessly at Reeves.*) "How de do, how de do! Take a seat. See you in a minute. No, I can't—" (*Telephone bell rings, Judge rises and goes to the receiver.*) "Hello, Sherman House? Oh, all right, Billy. No. Seventeen? All sold, Billy. Awfully sorry—I say I'm sorry, but the Standard Oil took the whole bus—. What's that? Oh! three thousand, unbroken lot. What? What they going to do with it? Going to put up a warehouse. I say, is Godfrey there yet? Godfrey? All right. Graham is here, and has offered seven fifty for the lot on sixteen. I'll sell at nine hundred cash. *All* right. Good-by."

(*Bell rings.*) "Godfrey? All right, let'er go! Eight fifty? Can't do it, Godfrey. Eight seventy-five? All right; come around." (*Turns.*) "I hated to sell that lot at that figger, it's worth more money. Can't I suit you with another lot?"

Frank (*gravely*). "No, I wanted that identical lot. It's handy. I don't want any lot on the north side anyhow." (*Bell rings again.*)

Judge to Reeves. "You'll excuse me, won't you?"

Reeves (*assuming a confiding air*). "Certainly. Don't allow me to interfere with your business. I just dropped in to ask — "

Judge (*at the telephone*). "Sherman House? All right. About No. Fourteen? Hold on a minute, I'll see. Graham, look up No. Fourteen, corner lot near the park."

Frank (*turning the leaves*). "All sold but one lot."

Judge (*significantly to Frank*). "Say, Graham, what's going on down at the Sherman House? Some nigger in the fence? They won't ketch *this* weasel asleep. Can't be they've got wind of the railway plan —"

(*Bell rings sharply.*) "Wait a minute, can't you? Hello! I can let you have one lot — can't say now. Call me up again in a few moments. All right, good-bye." (*To Frank.*) "I'll jest call up the Major and see what's going on." (*Rings bell.*) "Hello! Gimme the *Spike* office. Hello, Major! Say, Major, anything in from Hall? What? You don't say! Good. I'm onto the snap. Good-bye."

Judge sits down and dashes off a telegram. "Here, Tom, take this down to the office. Can't trust the telephone on this."

Reeves (*still in affectedly simple way*). "Business is rawther brisk, I take it." (*Exit Tom.*)

Judge (*carelessly*). "Oh, pooty fair — but I've got some dandy bargains."

Reeves. "I just dropped in to ask if you could get me a good — "

Judge. "Certainly. Get you anything." (*Gets book and takes it to Reeves.*) "Now, there is a lot on nine that's a jim dandy. Dirt cheap, at that. That lot is bound to be worth two thousand dollars before snow flies."

Reeves. "You don't say!"

Judge. "You bet it is."

Reeves. "What's going to make it so?"

Judge. "Why, the boom on this town. Look at the lines of road — seven lines of road running into the town, and a grade that will be ironed this fall. And then there is the plow factory, capital, hundred thousand,— grist-mill going up— "

Frank. "And the twine factory y' know."

Judge. "That's so! One o' the biggest schemes in the north-

west — millions of tons o' flax burned every year — millions o' pounds o' twine bought in every harvest — now a stock company is formed; they've bought No. Ten, entire — five thousand dollars — and put up works costing seventy-five thousand—"

Reeves (*in mock simplicity*). "Very intristing indeed. But I fancied you'd tell me about this timber-claim matter. I bought a claim of a fella a short time ago, don't you know, and when I saw it to-day it hadn't a tree in sight."

Judge (*placidly, while Frank laughs*). "A timber-claim, my dear sir, is not a claim with trees on it, but one on which the government wants trees."

Reeves. "Yo' don't say!"

Judge. "I do say."

Reeves. "But, you know, the fella said the timber would be immensely valuable after a few years."

Frank (*much amused*). "So it will, fifty years from now, when you've growed it."

Reeves. "Then according to that, you think I'm done."

Frank. "Done brown. No mistake."

Judge (*carelessly*). "No doubt of it. Got to keep an eye out. Now to get out o' this scrape you'd better invest with me. I've got a lot here that is bound to go up. On Main Street. See! It's worth two thousand, but I'll let you have it at seventeen fifty, seeing you were let down by that other fellah."

Reeves. "Very kind of you. But what's to make it go up as you say?"

Judge. "Why, the boom in the town, the people coming, and the scarcity of land. See!"

Reeves. "But there *isn't* a scarcity of land! I never saw so much land in my life. By George! it's astonishing what a country you've got here, and such high prices! I thought this was the country of free land."

Frank. "Oh, that's one o' the lies we print in our papers to bring people out here. It's free at so much — see!"

Reeves (*resuming his alert manner and crisp voice*). "Yes, I see, all that and a good deal more. I see you're a set o' land-sharks, and live off the industry of the town. You can't give me any points on that. I make it my business to down such fellows."

Frank (*leaping up*). "What? you! lookin' as you do?"

Reeves (*calmly*). "Looking as I do. See how my hair stands up. I've seen the cat."

Frank (*with a glow of friendliness*). "So've I, gi'me y'r hand." (*They shake and keep shaking.*) "You look like a dude, but you've got the grip of an honest man. I don't know where ye come from but I know where ye'll go to. Thunder an' blue

mud! why didn't you say so before!" (*Judge slips out.*) "Goin' t' stop long in town?"

Reeves. "Yes, several days."

Frank. "Visiting friends?"

Reeves. "Yes, the Edwards family."

Frank (*whistles*). "Oh, I see! Certainly! You're that du—ced good fellow from Boston." (*Taking him by the hand.*) "Success to you, comrade. She's a bonanza."

Reeves (*smiling*). "Thank you."

Frank. "Prospected 'round there myself till I saw 'twant no use, — claim pre-empted. Case of monopoly, see? Say, look here, send your things right over to my house. I keep open house for such chaps. Not a word, got 'a' be done."

Reeves (*going to the telephone*). "Well, if you insist."

Frank. "You bet I insist."

Reeves. "All right. I'll just ring up Billy down at the Sherman House." (*Turns crank. Tom, looking at window, grins.*)

Frank (*smothering his laughter*). "I would."

Reeves (*still turning crank*). "What the deuce do you call this thing?"

Frank (*shouting*). "Coffee-mill."

Reeves (*still grinding*). "Well, so should I."

Frank (*laughing yet*). "Oh, let up on it! That's only an innocent little joke for roping in tenderfeet. But never mind, I'll jest send a boy around."

Reeves. "Now look here! You don't mean to tell me that that telephoning was all bogus?"

Frank. "That's what it was. There's a button under the table there that rings the bell. See?" (*Pushes button and the bell rings.*)

Reeves (*in blank surprise. Whiting goes off laughing*).

"Well, for ways that are dark
And tricks that are vain,
The western land-shark is — original."

Frank. "Almost equal to stock gamblers. Well, how's things in Boston? By the way, I don't know your name. Don't make any difference — handier, that's all."

Reeves. "Walter Reeves, *Daily Events.*"

Frank. "Mine's Graham — Frank Graham. Say!" (*Looks around, sees Tom.*) "Tom, you run down to the Sherman and tell Billy to send Mr. Reeves' things up to my house." (*Exit Tom.*) "Old man, if I wasn't a married man, that girl of yours — well, let that pass. I congratulate you."

Reeves (*gravely*). "Graham, can you tell me anything about how things are going with them this year?"

Frank. "Yes, they're going pretty hard."

Reeves. "I feared so. In what way?"

Frank. "In all ways."

Reeves. "They're needy as ever?'

Frank. "Well, they're poor *enough.* But that girl — well, she's the mainstay of the family now. She's all that keeps 'em up. Old man, why don't you step in there and give 'em a lift? Excuse me, but I can't help saying that."

Reeves. "I wanted to, years ago, before they came west."

Frank. "And she objected?"

Reeves. "Yes, she objected."

Frank. "Why?"

Reeves. "Oh, I don't know — sort of pride! Edwards is one of these men who'll die in the harness, and go under the wheel before he'll give up, and she has a good deal of the same spirit."

Frank. "I see! Obstinacy, we call it here. Well, if they don't have a good crop this year I'm afraid he'll go under the wheel, sure. He's failing. By the way, want my team to drive out with?"

Reeves. "You are a friend indeed."

Frank (*looking out of the window*). "Nothin' too good—Hello! My wife coming to call me to dinner. Lucky I've got you with me to keep her off." (*Frank's wife, a pretty young girl, appears at the window as they go to the door. Frank introduces Reeves in dumb show outside and they go off. A moment of quiet, then enter Judge, stranger, and Tom.*)

Judge. "Now you just wait a moment and I'll ring up Griggs." (*Rings telephone bell.*) "Hello? Gimme Griggs and Mullens. Griggs? Well, Griggs, I've got an offer for your lot of seven-fifty — take it? Better take — nice man — grocery. What? Take it? *All* right, it goes."

Curtain.

Scene Third.— A Mid-day Prairie.

A small shanty on a wide, sea-like expanse of shimmering plain. Not a tree or shrub is in sight. In hollow back of the house, a yellow field of grain. The house stands on the left; on the right is a well and small granary. The well has a wheel, and two buckets, and a yellow-pine curbing. At the back right are hay-stacks and sheds, and above and beyond them the mottled prairie stretches infinitely, flooded with a hot, yellow glare of light. It is about two o'clock, and in the shadow cast by the little shanty, the action takes place. The occasional flute-like note of the prairie-lark is heard, and the sound of fowls.

Curtain discovers Alice seated in a low rocking-chair, near a little stand, in the shadow of the house. She sews, looking often away on the plain. Linnie is singing inside. When curtain is well up, Linnie comes out and takes seat on door-sill.

Linnie. "My goodness! Aint it hot! Phew! I hope mother won't try t' come home before sundown. Do y' s'pose *he* got in last night, Allie?"

Alice (*wearily laying her work down*). "Oh, I don't know, I don't know! I've looked so long across this endless prairie that my eyes ache. I can't look any more." (*Rising.*) "Come and look, dear. Isn't that a team? there, see! just rising the hill beyond the school-section."

Linnie (*looking away*). "Yes, that's a team. You c'n just see the buggy-top."

Alice (*nervously*). "Oh, if it shouldn't be Walter this time I should sink with disappointment. See how plainly the team can be seen now! I *know* it's Walter. How swiftly and how silently it comes." (*Putting her hands to her eyes.*) "Oh, this plain, this plain! It is so vast and so lonesome, there is no place so dreary to watch and wait in. It is so pitiless, so beautiful, and so impassive, like a dead sea. It crushes me — I think it will make me crazy."

Linnie (*her chin in her palms*). "I'm sick of it, too. It's bad as livin' back on Pleasant Street."

Alice. "Almost, not quite."

Linnie (*firmly*). "I do' know. I wish I could hear the little German band play as they used to, an' see the circus parades and the boys' regiment on the common. A monkey and a hand-organ just now would be gorgeous! Oh, I'm so tired o' this hot old prairie. I wish I was a fairy? Do you know what I'd do?"

Alice (*with eyes distract*). "No, dear."

Linnie (*with enthusiasm*). "I'd cause a great big hill all covered with real trees to spring up right out there. And I'd have a waterfall on it, and deer in it, and I'd have a fence around it and charge a dollar f' walkin' around it, and a quarter f'r lookin' at it, wouldn't that be a bonanzy?"

Alice. "Why, child, what an idea."

Linnie (*calmly*). "Frank Graham says that's the American idea — the fellow that owns the land always gets there. Oh, I wish that team'd hurry up. I don't know which I'd ruther die of, lonesomeness out here, or starve t' death in Boston." (*Looks off.*)

Alice (*walking about, looking away*). "I think it must be Walter. He's at the second moggason now. I hope it is!"

Linnie (*shortly*). "What y' goin' t' do if it is?"

Alice (*stopping short in a sort of new terror*). "Oh, I don't know! I haven't thought so far."

Linnie (*with positive inflection*). "I know what *I'd* do. I wish a Boston editor was comin' after me, I bet I'd go quicker'n scat."

Alice (*turning*). "Linnie, what do you mean by —"

Linnie (*decidedly*). "Mean what I say. I never'll marry any of these men and live out here, if — I — I'd ruther die an old maid in Boston than have forty husbands out here."

Alice (*with an effort to be calm*). "I am afraid to meet him—I wish I knew."

Linnie (*looking away again*). "I wish *I* did, but I don't. He's drivin' f'r home, whoever he is. He's in a hurry, f'r a hot day, and he's a-gitt'n' there. I hope he won't stay t' supper anyway. There aint any bread, and it's too hot t' make biscuit. Aint it awful on the grain? I can see father out there walkin' about in the wheat; he don't do nothin' else lately but watch the wheat an' the sky." (*Alice starts to go in.*) "Why don't y' wait and see who it is?"

Alice (*in growing excitement*). "I *must* go in. I can't stand out here and stare at him as he comes."

Linnie. "All right; I can stare enough f'r two. I'm goin' t' stand right here and see who it is. Teams are too scarce on this prairie to lose the excitement. Mebbe it aint Walter, anyhow, but they'll stop and get a drink o' water. Frank Graham says he don't see what there is wonderful about the water in our well, but there *must* be, f'r all the young fellows in the county drive around this way t' git a drink. I'm sure I don't understand it."

Alice. "Linnie, how can you joke?"

Linnie. "I don't know'm sure. Effect of the ozone in the air, as Frank says."

Alice (*going in*). "You'll tell me, dear, won't you?"

Linnie. "Yup. I'll keep my eye on him. Say, Allie, here comes father with a jug t' get s'm water."

Alice (*in the doorway*). "Don't say anything about my looking for Walter, to him. I want to see him alone, and then he *may* not come — please don't say anything, will you?"

(*Linnie puts her arm about her and nods her head, whispering to her. Alice goes in. Edwards comes on right, jug in his hand, which he proceeds to fill at the well with a dipper. He is very gloomy. He is without coat or vest and his hickory shirt is wet with sweat.*)

Linnie (*going to him*). "How is the haying, father? Poor poppa, how hot you are; come and sit down here in the shade."

Edwards (*taking off his hat and wiping face*). "They aint no rest for me, my daughter. If I should set around in the shade my girls wouldn't have any home soon. Rain 'r shine I've got 'o keep goin'" (*in a low voice*) "till I drop. Where's mother?"

Linnie. "Over t' Mrs. Elliot."

Edwards. "Where's Alice?"

Linnie. "In the house, lying down, I guess."

Edwards (*tenderly*). "Poor girl, she ought 'a' stayed in Boston. I don't know what we'd 'a' done without her, but she aint fit t' live here — it's killin' her." (*Groans.*) "My God! aint there no restin' place f'r us?" (*Scans the clouds.*) "If it would only rain, only rain." (*Takes up his jug and starts off, Linnie looking at him tearfully.*) "Dry as ashes!" (*He goes off. Linnie watches him, then turns and gazes away left as before.*)

Linnie (*calling*). "Allie, Allie, it *is* Walter, no other man would wear a plug hat out here. He's alone, and he's got Frank's team. I know every horse on this road."

(*Seats herself coolly on the doorstep and listens to the approaching wheels. Sound of voice speaking to horses.*)

(*Enter Reeves. Alice, seeing him from the door, hesitates, then goes to his open arms. He kisses her.*)

Reeves. "What's this? Crying? Why I thought you'd laugh when you saw me." (*Raises her face to his.*) "It's your guilty conscience. Little woman, that face shows care — life out here is killing you."

Alice (*smiling again*). "I'm only crying because — I've longed to see you — I've watched the road oh, so many hours, Walter. It was too much to expect, but I thought you'd come. It's so lonesome here." (*Exit Linnie.*)

Walter (*quizzically, looking down at her*). "Your letters didn't read that way, I can tell you that; they were cold and formal enough."

Alice. "I didn't dare write what I felt."

Reeves. "Why not?"

Alice. "Oh, because I was afraid!"

Reeves. "Afraid I'd come and get you, eh?"

Alice (*evading him*). "Don't ask me now. Let me enjoy your visit without thinking,— tell me about dear old Boston. Sit here while I get you a drink. You must be thirsty."

Reeves (*tenderly, smilingly*). "Yes, thirsty for the sight of you." (*Alice goes into the house. Reeves walks about, glancing keenly at all points of the plain.*) "So this is the reality of the emigrant's dream! The homestead in the free West, the house beside the river embowered in trees!

> A wide dun land where the fierce suns smite,
> And the wind is a furnace breath;
> Where the beautiful sky has a sinister light,
> And the earth lies dread and dry as death:
> Where the sod lies scorching, and the wan grass sighs,
> And the hot, red morning has no birds—

My God! what a place for my beautiful girl — for anybody's girl,— a wide-walled grave."

(*Alice enters with a glass which she fills and hands to him.*

He drinks, saying:) "In a land like this the gift of water must mean as it does with the Arabs, the highest hospitality."

Alice. "I can't say how much I — we — shall—"

Reeves (putting his arm about her). "Don't try. If I had only known your real feelings — but how *could* I from those letters?" *(Looking off left.)* "What in the world is that girl doing? She's unhitching my team! I'll stop her." *(Ex. 1, talking to Linnie.)*

Alice (walking about). "How can I let him go again? Have I the strength? But I must, I must! I can't leave father now, at the height of his terrible struggle. I must stay."

Walter (re-enters with Linnie, holding her by the hands). "I suppose this is Linnie — anyhow the little witch was unhitching my team; another minute and she might have had a runaway."

Linnie (scornfully). "Runaway nothing! What do you take me for? Allie and I hitch up the horses and go out in the fields — we plow, and drive harvester — and we help shock the wheat — don't we, Allie?"

Reeves (surprised). "Do you do that? With this hand, that I used to love to watch on the piano? O horror!" *(Strokes it.)* "Poor bruised little hand." *(Kisses it.)*

Linnie (goes off in mock disgust). "Girls like me don't count. *My* hand can get well itself f'r all you care. Wal 'n so it goes." *(Goes into house.)*

Reeves. "And you live there?" *(pointing at house.)*

Alice. "Yes, with my people."

Reeves. "Through your horrible winters?"

Alice (quietly). "Yes, and there are days when that hut, poor as it is, seems like a palace. Last winter it seemed as if the snow would never tire of sliding to and fro on the plains. Days and days we were shut up here."

Reeves (deeply affected). "Heavens, what a prison! And yet I saw dozens not so good as I came along."

Alice (quietly). "We lived in *that* sod-shanty a year."

Reeves (lifting his head). "And this is the free and glorious West! Oh, it makes me wild to think of you living there — it's worse than the tenement-house."

Alice (firmly but sweetly). "There was no other way. They couldn't have lived without me. My little teaching has kept us in groceries, and besides, there have been days when father was too lame to work and I have worked in the fields, and taken care of the cattle in the barn —"

Reeves (seizing her hands). "Don't tell me any more — I'll rage — I'll swear."

Alice. "We must bear it."

Reeves (savagely). "Bear it! *I* won't bear it. I'll expose

the whole infernal matter in a four-column leader. I'll smash the next boomer that says free land to me. Free land! if this is getting free land, what the devil —"

Alice (*stopping him*). "Hush, hush!"

Reeves (*freeing himself*). "I say, if this is free land what in the devil would you call high-priced land? The settler pays for his free land all that makes life worth living; these families have purchased their bare and miserable acres with blood and sweat and tears. Free land! Bah! For a century there has been no free land in America."

Alice (*trying to be calm*). "I know it, but it only makes it worse to think of it."

Reeves (*quickly*). "Forget it, then, for I've come to take you out of it. Hush, now! Not a word. I've let you spoil five of the best years of my life. You sha'n't say a word — I must be heard now."

Alice. "I can't, I daren't let you go on — I —"

Reeves (*sternly, almost angrily*). "Alice, you can and you must — I'm master now."

Alice (*repulsing him*). "You're *not*! You go too far —"

Reeves. "Alice, listen. I didn't mean that — forgive —"

Alice (*with stern resolution*). "You did — you meant it. Listen to *me*."

Reeves (*going on impetuously*). "I *will* listen, when you talk sense. I won't be put off any longer. You must decide. If you refuse —"

Alice (*feeling a covert threat*). "What then? Suppose I do?"

Reeves. "Then we never see each other again. There is a limit to my patience — be careful!"

Alice (*feeling his earnestness*). "*You* are the one to be careful! You are unjust. Am I here to please myself? You're harsh, unfeeling —"

Reeves (*warningly*). "Alice, Alice!"

Alice (*panting with emotion*). "It's true! Does my suffering count for nothing? My sacrifices? I see and feel all that you feel — and more. I feel that I can't leave my parents, and I won't leave them — now — while they are old, and poor, and need me so. You have no right to expect —"

Reeves. "What good has your sacrifices —"

Alice (*going on swiftly*). "See these hands — you don't know the half. I plow, I milk the cows; every hand is needed on the American farm. There is no law against child labor or woman labor there! But I could bear all this if *you* did not sneer — if you appreciated my sacrifices." (*Reeves bows his head.*) "I didn't expect that from you, Walter." (*In softer mood.*) "Wait another year — be patient; father may yet —"

Reeves (*rousing up*). "I don't mean to be hard, but you forget my side of it all. You forget how long I've waited. Another year and one of us may be dead; a railway accident, a stray bullet in the street, and we may be cheated. Alice! *Alice!* Don't send me back again with empty hands; don't do it. I can't stand that; I won't try." (*She makes no movement.*) "What is life worth out here — in this desert?"

Alice. "Nothing, but I must live it."

Reeves. "What do you hope to do by it?"

Alice. "Nothing. I'm past hope; I'm only enduring."

Reeves. "Alice, are you crazed? Has the silence and loneliness of this plain —"

Alice. "I don't know. Don't press me."

Reeves (*in despair*). "You are sacrificing us both, and all to no purpose. Answer me, what are you going to do?"

Alice (*flaming up again*). "Stay here! *Wait!*"

Reeves (*in despairing rage*). "Then you don't care for me; if you did —"

Alice (*shrinking*). "Walter, you have hurt me!"

Reeves (*leaping hastily toward her*). "Forgive me, I didn't mean that! Don't mind me, I'm wild. Alice, you must not send me away. It is the law of life for daughters to leave their parents."

Alice (*in a dull, but firm tone*). "It is not the law of *my* life. The walls of the beautiful home you offer me could never shut out the thought of their sorrows and privations. In the thunders of Brahms and Wagner, I should hear the wild wind blowing around this cabin here." (*Unclasping his hands.*)

Reeves. "But think — think."

Alice (*turning wildly*). "*Think!* I *have* thought till my brain whirled. In the awful silence of this prairie, you can't help but think. I've grown old in thinking. I seem to have lived three years in one. I saw my father toiling in the fruitless fields, my sister growing up in ignorance, the splendor of the great world of music lost to me, you lost to me! I've thought, and *thought*, till death would be a relief."

Reeves. "Give it up to me, dearest. Let me help you. Let me take care of you — all. I'll put your father on his feet —"

Alice (*with love in her face*). "I *knew* you'd say that. You meant it all the while. But he would never consent. He's so proud — stubborn, if you will — when he bends he will break. Mother no longer comforts him, he turns to me for comfort and sympathy. He needs *me* more than he needs money. No, dear, there is no present help for it. You must go back to your splendid life in the city, and I must stay to help my father fight his almost hopeless battle." (*She raises her hand.*) "It is useless, *cruel* to say more. I have my father's pride —"

Reeves. "And his wilfulness; but I *will* not leave you so."

Alice (*with a look of iron resolution*). "Walter, you *must*."

(*They stand and face each other in silence, gazing into each other's eyes. It is a battle of wills. There is no yielding in her steady eyes. At last he turns in a sudden anger and starts away. She relaxes, her head sways, her eyes close; but as he turns with a look of great sorrow, extending his arms,* "Alice, *Alice,* love!" *she resumes her implacable mood, lifting her hand and speaking the single word* "DUTY!" *He bows his head and goes out. She stands long gazing after him, silent, her wide eyes fixed on the horizon, then melts like a figure of snow, falling without word or sound.*)

Curtain slowly falls.

Scene Fourth.— A Settler's Harvest.

Landscape as before. It is later and the sun is lower. Clouds are seen in the distance. It is very still, the crickets are chirping drowsily. Mrs. E. sitting as if wearied, has her bonnet on, and is rocking to and fro in the chair. Alice is seated with her work before her, silently looking out on the plain. Linnie is washing potatoes.

Mrs. E. "Linnie, girl, did you shut up the little turkies, as I told you to?"

Linnie (*in the doorway*). "Yes, mamma, but you needn't think it's going to rain. I b'lieve as father does, it can't rain."

Mrs. E. "Where is he?"

Linnie. "Looking at the wheat, I guess."

Mrs. E. (*sighing*). "Well, I guess you'd better start a fire, Linnie, and make some biscuit."

Linnie. "Oh, it's too hot to start a fire. Let's eat bread and milk t' night."

Mrs. E. "No, your pa ought 'o have a good supper; he haint hed much appetite lately. I do' know what keeps him up."

Alice (*turning suddenly*). "Mother, Linnie, don't tell father of my — of him — not to-night; he's got all he can bear now. I don't want him to know anything about it, not just yet."

Linnie (*takes up the potatoes she has been washing, and goes in. Mrs. E. turns to Alice*). "I know what Mister Reeves wanted, Allie, dear."

Alice. "Yes, he wanted me; he came expecting me to go back with him."

Mrs. E. "Poor child, I wish you could go."

Alice (*almost fiercely*). "And leave you all here on the prairie to starve and die? And father almost crazy.— I'm not so heartless as that!" (*Rising, and pressing her hands to her head.*) "But, oh, I don't see why the world should be so cruel—I don't see why, if God is good, life should be such a ceaseless battle!"

Mrs. E. (*sighing deeply*). "I don't see how we *could* git along without you. Why didn't he stay t' supper an' see Jason?"

Alice (*sternly*). "Because I sent him away — I couldn't hold out much longer. O mother, MOTHER!" (*Goes to her, and lays her head in her lap.*) "I must be right, for I have given all I hoped for, to do this."

Mrs. E. (*stroking her hair*). "I'm afraid you was wrong, I'm afraid so."

Alice (*brokenly*). "I know what you mean, mother. O mother, I sent him away — without a kiss! I didn't dare be tender, I was so weak. Oh, will the night of poverty never lift? Is this the whole of life, for us to toil, and moil, and die on this hot, drear plain?"

Mrs. E. (*resignedly*). "I s'pose it's the Lord's will, Allie."

Alice. "I don't. The Lord is good; men and men's laws are bad. God never created us for such lives as this. He never intended we should lack any good thing."

Mrs. E. "How you talk! Surely we can't complain."

Alice (*going on*). "We are not here because He asked it, but because men push us out. Everywhere men are pushed to the wall; everywhere the poor work and get nothing —"

Mrs. E. (*rising*). "There, there, child, don't you —"

(*A voice is heard faintly singing:*)

> "The South may sing of her su-u-u-n-i-i-i-y clime;
> The East of her hoarded wealth . . . . .
> But the West, the West, the beautiful West . . . .
> I can see thee in my dreams;
> From a far-off soil my feet have trod
> I can see her laughing streams."

Elliot (*enters right, goes to well, takes dipper of water. Nods to Alice*). "Hot, aint it? Nothing special in this water?" (*Sips meditatively, laughs. Linnie comes to the door.*) "I s'pose no man under fifty can find the dipper. Haf t' ask for a glass. Oh, I'm onto their little game!" (*Laughs. To Mrs. E.*) "You'd better think agin before refusing my offer on the 'spark arrester.' Another year and you'll be over-run by 'em."

Linnie (*coming toward him*). "What in the world are you talking about?"

Elliot. "Spark arrester — prevents trouble — arrests all sparks—indispensable to all mothers of girls." (*Laughs. Linnie turns in disgust.*) "Hot, aint it? Which'd you rather do 'r go a-fishin'?"

Linnie. "Go a-fishin'."

Mrs. E. "Oh, I do so long for fish! I'd give anything for a good fresh lobster."

Elliot. "Lobster! I'd as soon eat a t'rantler."

Alice (*putting on a wide hat*). "I'll go call father, mother." (*Goes slowly out.*)

(*Voice heard again singing nearer.*)

"Don't you see the dark clouds risin' ober yander?
Don't y' tink wese gwine t' hab a rain,
Oh yes, as sure as shootin'
There's the lightnin' scootin'
Like wese gwine t' hab a jimmycane!"

(*Enter Frank Graham and Judge Balser in buggy. Frank is in his shirt sleeves, his feet on the dash-board, and is very comfortable. As the Judge pulls up, Frank goes into the chorus pointing at the clouds.*)

"Look away there now, suthin' gwine drap;
Look away there — thunder aint it warm!
Lightnin' bugs a scootin',
Thunder guns a shootin',
Bet — your — life we're goin' t' have a storm."

(*Leaps out and comes forward greeting Mrs. E. and Linnie, gives a prodigious start at seeing Elliot.*) "Ett too, Brooty? Great Cæsar, has it come to this! That a man of your weight in the community,"— (*To Linnie.*) "Will you bring me a glass?"

Elliot (*shaking with laughter*). "Why here's a dipper in the bucket. That's too thin."

Frank (*in great surprise*). "Why so there is!"

Elliot. "Same old trick."

(*Linnie hands Frank a glass, he turns the water from cup into glass and drinks.*) "Thanks, a sweeter draught from a fairer hand was hardly ever quaffed. I'm a married man now and I'm obliged to modify my words." (*To Mrs. E.*) "How is your health these days?"

Mrs. E. "Not very well. How are your folks?"

Frank. "Oh, so's t' be round. I tell 'em we might as well laugh as cry; it'll rain jest as quick, mebbe a little quicker."

(*Re-enter Alice.*) "How de do, Miss Edwards."

Alice (*greets him and the rest quietly, then says to the Judge*): "I'd like to speak with you."

Judge (*elaborately*). "Desire is mutual, I assure you." (*As he and Alice move forward, Frank and Linnie remain at the well. Elliot and Mrs. E. converse, pointing at the sky.*)

Alice (*appealingly*). "Judge, can't you be easy on father this year? Can't you let the mortgage run? And the interest? It seems as if he'd go crazy with worry. Oh, if you only could — wait till another crop —"

Judge (*hastily*). "I should be very glad to do so, Miss Edwards, if it was possible; but you see I've nothing to do with the busi-

ness. I'm only an agent of the syndicate. There are thousands of other farmers in the same fix, and if I let one go they'd *all* want —"

Alice (*despairingly*). "Then take the land. Don't delude us with the idea of ownership, when there is only slavery —"

Judge. "But we don't *want* the land. We've got more land now than we know what to do with. All we want is the interest on mortgages."

Alice (*muses a moment. Elliot is heard laughing. At last Alice lifts her face*). "I see! It pays better to let us think we own the land than it would to pay us wages. We work cheaper. You're right! Your system is perfect — and heartless. It means death to us and all like us. We are homeless again." (*Clasping her hands in agony.*) "Homeless and almost hopeless. O father!"

(*Buries her face in her handkerchief and goes out.*)

Frank (*wonderingly*). "Now I wonder what all that means. Well, we must vamoose. Good-day, Mrs. Edwards. You tell Jason that I'll stand between him an' the Judge if it takes a leg." (*To Linnie.*) "Aw ressyvore, Miss Linnie." (*To Judge as they go out.*) "A day of reckoning is coming for you, you infernal old blood-sucker."

(*As they drive off his clear young voice takes up another song.*)

> "So look out there, Judge, suthin' gwine to drap.
> Look out there, better peel y'r eye;
> Speckylation fallin',
> Speckylation fallin',
> Farmers gwine okkypy de lan'."

Elliot. "Well, I must be moseyin' back home. I tell yeh it's goin' to rain." (*Exit.*)

Mrs. E. "Can y' see y'r pa comin'?"

Linnie. "Yes, he's coming with Alice. Oh, dear, what shall I have for supper?" (*Goes in.*)

(*Enter Alice and Edwards. He has a handful of blighted wheat in his hand.*)

Alice (*trying to cheer him up*). "It's going to rain, father, I know it is. See the clouds gathering over there in the west. We'll hear the thunder giant begin to walk pretty soon."

Edwards (*sinking into a seat and staring at the heads of wheat in his hands*). "*Rain!* It can't rain now. Them clouds'll pass right by, jest as they've done f'r the last six weeks. See that wheat out there, swash like water? Y' wouldn't think t' see it from here thet the ground was dry an' hot as ashes — but it is. Rain! A man might pray an' pull till his eyes dropped out an' he couldn't draw one cloud an inch nearer. We might jest as well give it up." (*Flings the wheat to the ground.*)

Alice (*pleading with him, her arm on his neck*). "Don't give up now, father. Please don't talk so, it hurts us. Mother, talk to him — cheer him up."

Mrs. E. (*in a dull placid way*). "Can't you eat sumpthin', Jason? Linnie, I guess we'll leave the table inside t'night, it's a little cooler since the sun went under the cloud."

Alice. "Let's fight just as long as we can."

Edwards. "It aint no use, Allie, my girl, everything's aginst us. Everything —"

Alice (*picking up the wheat*). "But if the rain comes now?"

Edwards. "It can't save it. See them heads — an' then jest see them white spots in the field."

Alice (*after looking with tearful eyes*). "I see them, what does it mean?"

Edwards (*slowly, bitterly*). "It means blight. It means my third crop is burnt to ashes. It means failure, that's what it means. It means the foreclosure of that morgige."

Alice. "Is there no hope?"

Edwards. "No. We're in the jaws of a machine. We was squeezed out o' Derry, we was squeezed out o' the city, an' now we're bein' squeezed out for the last time in a territory o' free land. I'm jest about ready to quit. I've lost my grip."

Alice (*at her wits' end*). "Oh, I wish I could do something— say something to help you! It frightens me when you begin to fail."

Edwards. "There's a quarter-section o' wheat dry enough t' burn — a field of empty heads — empty as my hands when they ought t' be as heavy as my head feels. Oh, I can't stand this!" (*Rises, paces to and fro in agony, then sits again with head in hands.*)

Mrs. Edwards (*from the door*). "Come, Jason, and have s'm tea — it'll do y' good."

Edwards (*without raising his head*). "I can't eat. I don't feel as if I could ever eat another mouthfle as long as I live."

Alice. "*Try* to eat, for our sakes."

Linnie (*coming out*). "Come, poppa, the tea's most ready."

Edwards (*after a pause*). "It aint no use, Jennie, childern! I've got to the end o' my rope. We've tried our last chance an' we've failed. This is the upshot of our dream. The great free West! Free t' starve in. Just as a desert is free. I've strained every muscle all my life and this is the result of it. If the blight, 'r the frost, 'r the drouth didn't take m' crop, taxes, an' the railroads, and the landlords did. Every year puts us deeper in a hole."

(*Alice is stroking his hair, Linnie has buried her face in Mrs. Edwards' lap.*)

"My life is a failure. Jennie, y'r mother an' me have worked every well day of our lives, rain 'r shine, winter 'r summer; we aint had the necessities t' say nuthin' of the luxuries o' life. Rents, an' fuel, an' food went up an' up, an' wages down, an' then we tried our last chance, an' here we are."

(*Faint far away is heard the boom of thunder.*)

Linnie (*leaping up*). "*Hark!* It's going to rain sure!" (*Runs to the corner of the house.*)

Edwards (*in the same tone*). "The poor house is the next thing. My strength is almost gone. Old and worse than useless. Life aint worth livin', jest work, work till y' die."

Mrs. E. "Can't we sell an' go back, Jason?"

Edwards (*bitterly*). "Sell! We aint got nuthin' t' sell, and if we had, nobody'd buy in this God-forsaken country. No, there aint no place left 'cept—"

(*Boom, Boom, Boom.*)

Mrs. E. (*rising*). "I believe it will rain!"

Linnie (*dancing about*). "I *know* it will! O Allie, come and see how fast the clouds are coming." (*Stage darkens.*) "Oh, how dark it's gettin'— oh, oh, oh, I'm afraid! It's goin' to lightning."

Alice (*joining her at the back*). "It's only a sudden wind-shower. Isn't it grand? See that gigantic dust-colored cloud rolling before the wind! It reaches almost across the whole horizon. It will be here in a moment. It's going to blow frightfully and it is going to rain, father."

(*Boom, Boom, Boom.*)

(*Stage darkens, figures grow dim.*)

Edwards (*without rising*). "It's too late to save—"

Mrs. E. "I must shut the windows." (*Goes in.*)

(*Crash, boom, boom. A far-away crescendo, appalling roar is heard, accompanied by a hissing sound.*)

Alice (*fascinated by the sight*). "How it sweeps on. Isn't it grand, Linnie? See how the clouds roll and spread! What majesty of motion! See, Linnie, that dusty-gray veil behind the storm-cloud is the falling rain. How like the sea the plain is now! The clouds rush against each other— Oh, see that monstrous swirl, father!" (*As she speaks the roar deepens.*) "See! it looks like a vast eye— a yellow-green light streams from its centre. Look, a beautiful silvery-white veil falls from it and trails along the ground— it shimmers like snow! Hear it roar! father, what is it?"

Edwards rises and rushes to her side. The hissing, roaring sound deepens, nears. Alice lifts her face in inquiry, Linnie flies to her mother who has joined them.

Edwards cries hoarsely, "In with ye, *quick!*"

Mrs. E. and Linnie retreat to the doorway. Alice remains

by her father's side. Edwards with set and sullen face made livid by the lightning's yellow-green glare, lifts his hand, half groans, half imprecates:—

"Hail, by the livin' God!"

The lightning again flashes. The storm and the wind rushes upon them carrying away the roof of the kitchen with a crash. Edwards is seen to fall with Alice clinging to him, and amid the screams of the women, the roar of the wind and hail, darkness falls on the scene.

Curtain.

Scene Fifth.—A Game of Quoits.

A cool and dewy morning in Boomtown. A side street. At the centre, back, is the blacksmith shop of Ole Kettleson, its battlemented end standing to the street. At the left is a vacant lot, and over it the plain is seen in the distance, with here and there small cottages. The vacant lot is grown up to wild sun-flowers, now in their finest bloom. To the right of the shop is a lumber-pile, and over it the plain and sky. The crickets are chirping.

On the right, forming a third of the side of the stage, is the "Wamburger Grocery." On the left, similarly situated, is the "Oat Bin Saloon." There is a side door in the saloon.

The buildings are all battlemented, and are painted white on the front. The blacksmith-shop is unpainted. Before it a group of men are good-naturedly disputing over a game.

The men are mainly in their shirt-sleeves, and wearing broad, greasy white hats. Frank Graham wears a derby hat and dark clothes, his coat being laid aside. Judge is dressed with usual studious neatness, and takes little part in the affair, smoking daintily as he watches the game. Elliot has no vest and no hat on, and his hickory shirt is rolled to the elbows. A red handkerchief is tucked into his suspenders. The rest have a similar bandanna around their necks or tucked into their hip pockets.

The door of the shop is open and within the smith is dimly seen and the sound of his hammer is heard. As the curtain rises the crowd are bent around a peg at the left. Frank is at the right, poising to throw his last horse-shoe. Tompkins, with legs wide apart, and hands in pockets is near him. Frank yells warningly.

"Stand away from there, you fellers, you're too previous. I've got another shoe yet. Now watch me make a ringer. Whoo — oop!" (*Throws, and cuts a caper. The rest all rush for the peg.*)

All. "It's a tie, a tie!"

Frank. "Tie nothin'! That's mine. Oh, come off! hold on! Measure it, Tonguey, leave it to Tonguey." (*Tonguey picks up a straw and measures it carefully.*)

Elliot. "Careful now! No thumbin' that shoe."

(*Tonguey rises and kicks the shoes, nodding at Frank who howls and pummels Elliot on the back.*)

Frank. "No bulldozing, Tonguey, you old jumbo." (*The blacksmith comes to the door and looks on.*)

Elliot. "Wal, that's one on me. Let 'er go, Smith."

Frank. "All right; here goes for a hubber." (*Throws. Shoe rolls out of sight. Frank whistles to it.*)

Elliot (*shouting with merriment*). "Put a bell on that shoe, Tonguey, it'll get lost. Now see *me* put a *ringer* on that peg." (*Makes elaborate preparation, turning the shoe round and round in his hand.*)

Frank (*wildly*). "See him! He's witching the shoe. Say, let up on that hoodoo business, or I'll —"

Elliot (*throws, shouting*). "A hubber, a hubber!"

Frank. "'Tis, hay! I'll fix it." (*Throws second shoe and knocks the other down, rushes after it.*)

Elliot (*excitedly*). "Watch him, Tonguey, watch 'im." (*Prepares to throw, leaning far over.*) "See me plat this right inside 'em both." (*Throws, and as he rushes for the peg, Frank springs before him and they go round and round the stake.*)

(*Frank crowding him away, and calling wildly:*)

"Measure it, Tonguey, measure it — I must —" (*Here he slips out of the way and Elliot rolls on the ground. All roar with laughter, but Tonguey gravely takes up Elliot's shoes and hands them to him. Frank and Elliot now retire to the other peg while their partners throw. After each throw they crowd over the peg to see which shoe is nearest, encouraging the others by word and action.*)

Frank. "Now, partner, knock that hubber off, 'r I'll dock ye." (*Partner throws, Elliot fans it back with his hat.*) "Aw! no good. A little more steam, Hank."

Hank. "Waal, that air hoodoo's scarin' m' shoes." (*Throws again.*) "How's that?"

Frank. "That's better, but you've got to stand by me a little better or we're beat." (*Elliot roars and picks up his shoes. Reeves enters rear and stands looking on.*)

Elliot. "That makes us ten, twelve's the game. Here goes f'r two." (*Throws. Yells with delight.*) "Another hubber."

Frank. "Hubber nawthin'!"

Elliot (*stretching out prodigiously*). "Now, now see me."

Frank (*excitedly*). "Yes, I see yeh, you old hippotaymos — I see you getting your foot away from that peg. H'are! Hold on! Why don't you *carry* the shoe over?"

Elliot (*pausing*). "I don't need to as bad's you do." (*Throws and groans.*)

Frank. "Serves y' right." (*As he is throwing, Johnson comes on with a sickle in his hand, which he leans up against the shop door, and comes down to where Daddy Ruble is standing, cackling at the game.*)

Johnson. "Hello, you old moss-back."

Ruble. "Hello, you old copperhead."

Johnson. "Aint ye got nothin' better'n this t' do?"

Ruble. "No, I haint." (*The crowd laugh at their game, and the old men turn to look.*)

Johnson. "You might be prayin' f'r a wind t' hist the grain. Some fields look 's if a herd of ellyfunts had bin waltzin' on top of it."

Daddy. "Bad as that!"

Johnson (*savagely*). "Yes, an' worse. Old Jason Edwards' grain is jest pounded clear out o' sight, an' his house blowed six ways f'r Sunday. I've got sixty acres that won't pay t' cut."

Frank (*is heard saying:*) "Hold on, let Tonguey —"

Daddy Ruble. "Can't lay this t' taxation 'r anything, can ye?"

Johnson. "You bet I can. If 'twant f'r monopoly in land, we wouldn't be crowded away out here on this cussed prairie — we'd be living where it can rain without blowin' hard enough t' tear the ears off a cast-iron bulldog."

Elliot (*coming up to them*). "At it again, are yeh? I'd like t' see you ol' seeds quit quarrelin' an' go to fightin'." (*Exit Johnson, after giving his sickle to the smith.*)

(*Enter a tall, awkward boy carrying a large, white jug. He wears a sheepish grin, and is in a hurry to get by. Elliot stops him.*)

Elliot. "Hold on there, young man." (*The rest echo the cry.* "What's your hurry, bub? What's in it? 'Lasses, I reckon. Gin I hope. Wait a little," etc.

Elliot (*with gravity*). "Young man, I am notary of the public, and must note all public things of this nature. Show up."

(*Boy turns the jug, displaying in large, black letters on the jug,* Boiled Oil.) "Boiled oil, hay? I take no man's word, much less a jug's." (*Pulls stopper, smells. Boy grins. Elliot replaces stopper, with a wave of the hand.*) "O. K., pass. Stand aside, gents, and let the cortege pass. Now, who in this crowd's got any conceit of himself on quates? Hay! No one speaks. I'll try ten points f'r beer f'r the crowd — hay?"

Whiting. "I'll take yeh — if Frank don't."

Frank. "I don't play f'r beer."

Elliot. "All right, Frank, here goes." (*Game goes on.*)

Frank (*coming over where Reeves is standing*). "How'd you leave the old man?"

Reeves (*gravely*). "Not much change. His fever is high. By the way, a man would hardly realize that the land had been swept by a frightful storm, to see these fellows here in the bright morning sunshine pitching quates, eh! So goes the way o' the world, comedy holding the hand of tragedy."

Frank. "Yes, there's alwiz a raft of just such lahees, my-

self included, who'd laugh if their mother-in-law died. Elliot, there, does nothing but laugh and grow fat; a fella might as well. Hail did knock things galley-west sure."

Reeves. "Your climate is so sinister in its beauty, so delusive in its brightness, I don't realize, myself, what's been done; the horror of last night seems like the exaggeration of a dream. The plain is so fresh, the air so soft and fragrant. There is no receding swell like that on the ocean to tell of the devastation that has just marched with the tempest."

Frank. "I guess the Edwards family find it reality."

Reeves (*reaching out his hand*). "Graham, old man, it's due to you that they are sheltered and cared for."

Frank. "Oh, drop that. That's nawthin'!"

Reeves (*muses sadly a few moments. The players go into the saloon laughing*). "I guess the old man's work is about finished. It isn't a thing to be altogether sorry for, either. I don't suppose he ever knew freedom from care — few of us do. Our whole infernal civilization is a struggle. We are climbing a perpendicular cliff with a bottomless gulf below — clinging desperately to tiny roots and crevices and toiling upward, eyes fixed on the green and pleasant slopes above. We strain and strive, now slipping, now gaining, while our hair whitens with the agony of our aching, failing muscles. One by one we give up and fall with wild curse or groan — but the others keep on not daring to look down — there is no place to rest from torturing thought save, perhaps, in the black depths beneath. Graham, I don't suppose Edwards knows what rest is. It makes me savage when I think of such men grinding away from youth to age, and getting nothing for it."

Frank. "Knocks an eye out of the American eagle, sure's you're born. But there's just one class o' men who don't need to be thinkers or workers."

Reeves. "I know. You mean —"

Frank. "The man who owns the earth."

Judge (*approaching from left*). "Fine morning after the shower."

Frank. "Call it a shower do you, you old boomer."

Judge. "Oh yes; little severe of course. Grain blown down a little here and there — every State in the Union liable to such — damage merely nominal. Wind'll lift it during the day."

Frank. "Well, you *are* a daisy!"

Reeves (*savagely*). "The whole of this settlement is unnatural. You're *flung* out here — pushed on by speculation. This country ought to have been twenty years settling. Would have been only that the millions of acres of unused land between here and Chicago are *owned* by railway syndicates and private speculators who are waiting to levy tribute on —"

(*The Judge is getting uneasy, looks at his watch. Frank is smiling. Elliot coming to the side door of the saloon.*) "Gents, come an' take sumpthin'."

Judge (*going*). "Don't care if I do. Lemonade."

Elliot (*to bar-keeper within*). "Lemonade. Mix one o' the Judge's lemonades. Come in, Frank. To-day don't count." (*Judge and Elliot go in.*)

Frank. "Every day counts with my pledge. If you wan' to shorten y'r life ten years (*Elliot disappears*) why! go ahead! Life aint s' cheap with me as that." (*Noise inside.*) "Guzzle, you infernal idiots! You'd drink when y'r wives and children hadn't a shoe to their feet. Oh, you make me tired." (*Sings, while throwing the shoes.*)

(*Reeves goes to the door of shop. Crowd re-enters from the left. Elliot and Judge bringing up the rear, they join in the song. The blacksmith goes into shop and begins to hammer. Players take their places. Judge comes forward followed by Elliot who is telling a story. The crowd surround him. They all burst into wild laughter. Elliot looks surprised. The Judge looks foolish.*)

Elliot (*yelling above the roar*). "What the devil y' all laughing at?"

(*All laugh and thump Elliot and the Judge.*)

(*Johnson entering from the left, stops the crowd with a wild gesture and speaks savagely.*)

"Oh, you fellers 're awful chipper, but just look there!" (*They turn to look where he points, in silence.*) "There goes Charley Severson, as fine a man as ever lived, on his way to the insane asylum, a ravin' maniac. He couldn't stand the strain. They say they aint a spear o' wheat standin' on his land, but he's rich now! He's got through a little earlier than the rest of us."

(*Two men holding Severson come on left and pass rapidly across the stage. The maniac looks wildly from his broken hat. Behind him walks a handsome Norwegian girl, in sorrow too great for tears or cries. She leads two children. As they pass the curtain falls.*)

Scene Sixth.—A Charity Bed.

Time, early morning, two days after the storm. Set, parlor and bedroom in Frank Graham's house. Parlor left, bedroom right, door connecting. Windows are open in parlor and the brilliant prairie can be seen beyond. On the bed, right upper corner bed-room, Jason Edwards is lying still as death. Around him are signs of medicine, bottles, glasses, etc. The rooms are cheaply but pleasantly furnished and all is cheerful The chirp of insects and noise of fowls can be heard entering open windows.

(*As the curtain rises Alice is discovered flitting about the room. She comes occasionally to the bed to study the face of*

her father. At last she goes out into the parlor and meets Frank Graham, who is entering at the opposite door.)

Alice. "Good-morning, Mr. Graham. Did you see the doctor when he was here this morning? What did he say?"

Frank. "Not much of anything. Pinched his chin in the usual manner and looked as wise as he could. I take it he's in no present danger — sort of nervous prostration, very fashionable just now. Is he sleeping yet?"

Alice (in a troubled tone). "Yes, and it frightens me. He hasn't spoken to me in thirty-six hours. Since that terrible moment he has lain there, so like the dead!"

Frank. "That shows how worn out he was. Sleep is just what he needs. He'll come out all right in a day or two."

Alice. "Who watched with him after Walter went away?"

Frank. "Walter didn't go away."

Alice. "Why, he promised he would!"

Frank. "Well, he stayed right here, wouldn't hear to my sitting up. He went down street a little while ago to get a cup of coffee — be back soon."

Alice. "How good he — you all are."

Frank. "Yes, we're all right now. But let me give you a word of advice. Reeves is touchy as a bear with sore ears. You treat him carefully. Whatever he plans you carry out — now mind that."

Alice. "What do you mean?"

Frank (grimly). "I've said." (*Exit l.*)

(*Alice stands musing. Reeves enters left, grave almost stern, she does not hear him, he puts his arm about her shoulders. She starts slightly, looks up and smiles.*) "How kind, how generous you are to us!"

Reeves (looking down at her). "Nothing of the kind, I assure you. We're all egotists at bottom — even in our charities. I'm no exception, don't think I am. How is he now?"

Alice (fondly). "As if you didn't know, you stubborn boy! I've found out how you obey my orders. You sat here beside his bed all night."

Reeves. "That was to ease my conscience. He's still sleeping?"

Alice. "Yes, so soundly! What does it mean?"

Reeves. "It means rest. As I sat by his side last night I saw the congested blood slowly retreat from his head till his face grew white, and his pulse more natural, till his swoon became sleep. And sitting there I thought and thought, till thought became resolution." (*Approaching her again.*) "Alice, my dearest, are you satisfied? Will you give up the battle? It's been a hopeless struggle from the first. You are helpless and homeless

now. Will you refuse my help again? It was morbid — useless."

Alice (*evading his eyes*). "My first duty was to my parents. O Walter, Walter, to think what they have suffered! Think of the unutterable tragedy of such a life — to work all one's days in storm and heat — and then lie *there!*"

Walter (*firmly*). "Don't evade me — you sha'n't evade me now. Will you come to me, you and yours? Will you let me care for you? Look at *me*. Don't look away — answer me *now*."

Alice (*yielding to him at last, puts her arms about his neck*). "If I am worth so much."

Walter (*triumphantly*). "So much! You are worth acres of diamonds!"

Alice (*smiling*). "Oh, you say so now."

Reeves (*in the same exultant strain*). "And I'll say so ever! Now let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide-arched — what's the rest of it? I'll be generous indeed, I'll forgive and forget. But dearest, what a tragedy had been, had I married some other Boston girl during those years!"

Alice. "I was afraid you would — I couldn't have blamed you if you had."

Reeves (*with a profound sigh*). "All that saved you was your coldness. The more I couldn't get you, the more, of course, I wanted you; it's the way."

Alice. "According to that reasoning, I've done wrong to promise anything now."

Reeves. "That's a *non sequitur*. You're mine —"

Alice. "Yes, but — "

Reeves. "But me no buts. I won't stand it!"

Alice. "But father is so inflexible, he hates charity so. He may not consent to be helped even now — "

Reeves. "Trust the whole matter to me. I'll be a sort of special providence,— nothing flatters a man more than to be a sort of lieutenant to God." (*Tenderly, almost reproachfully.*) "Allie, Allie, what happy years were lost, what sorrowful ones suffered by his pride and your wilfulness."

Alice. "It was not wilfulness, it was — "

Reeves (*hastily*). "I'll retract! I'll retract! It was heroism. — Only, forget it all now. Let the hand of labor swell, and the weary head bow. Let the wind lay hard on the icy plain and the hail of summer trample the wheat. Let the roar and rush of trade go on in its granite grooves. *You* are out of the press. My lily, my life shall be devoted to making you forget — "

Alice (*musing sadly*). "I *am* out of the press, *but not by my*

own merit. Hush, you know what I mean! I hate charity, because it is not justice, and after all, I am saved by a sort of charity. The world's injustice remains, my failure remains."

Reeves (with a sigh). "True. But you and I can't bring the millennium by living apart and suffering needlessly. So look up, my flower! The failure is not so hopeless."

(*Enter Mrs. E. and Frank, Alice meets her mother, Frank and Reeves talk apart.*)

Mrs. E. "Why didn't you wake me up?"

Alice. "It wasn't necessary, Walter —"

Mrs. E. "How is he now?"

Alice. "Walter and the doctor think he is better and that when he wakes he will know us."

(*They quietly enter and stand looking down on the sleeping man. Reeves and Frank talk apart.*)

Frank (bursting out). "Good! that's —"

Reeves. "To-day, you understand."

Frank. "I savvy."

Reeves. "As soon as Edwards is able to give his consent."

Frank. "That's business, that's the way we do it out here. Civil contract. No frills, no nonsense."

Reeves. "The Judge will do, he'll have to do. Now see that everything is O. K., papers, etc."

Frank (going out). "Trust me, old man."

(*As Reeves enters the bedroom, Linnie, with hair flying, comes bounding in, joyfully, childishly.*) "Oh, poppa's better, I know he is!"

(*They silence her. Edwards stirs slightly then opens his eyes clear and quiet. Alice falls on her knees by his side. At length he speaks.*) "Good mornin', mother, Allie." (*His voice is husky, his lips dry.*)

Alice. "Don't you want a drink of water?"

(*He sips it.*) "Where's my — where's my baby?"

Linnie. "Here I be, poppa."

(*Edwards puts his arm feebly over her head and snuggles her face down by his cheek. He sees Reeves, looks at him wonderingly. Extends his hand.*) "How d' do, sir — didn't know yeh at first." (*Looking around the room.*) "Why, we aint in Boston! Is this your house, sir?"

Alice. "No, this is Frank Graham's, father." (*He doesn't understand, she explains.*) "Don't you know how the storm came and blew down —"

(*He remembers now.*) "Is it passed off?"

Mrs. E. "All clear and bright, Jason.

Edwards. "Then it *was* blowed down."

Alice. "Yes, father, the shed was torn away and every win-

dow broken. I dragged you in and then Mr. Elliot and Frank came —"

Edwards (*in the same slow way*). "An' the wheat's all cut t' pieces?"

Mrs. E. "Yes, Jason, worse'n you c'n think."

Edwards (*after a long pause*). "Then I may jes' 's well die. It aint no use! I can't never git up agin, with all them morgiges weighin' me down —"

Mrs. E. "O Jason, Jason!"

Alice. "Live for our sakes, father, for Linnie."

Linnie. "You *must* get well, poppa, I won't let you die. We won't have a home without you."

Edwards. "I'd only be a burden to yeh, stid of a blessin'. I'm old, old! So old I don't feel as if —" (*To Reeves.*) "An' it was all tromped down?"

Reeves. "All destroyed. The centre of the — the storm seemed to move right across."

Edwards (*in deep bitterness*). "Of course! God an' man joined hands t' break me down. They aint but jest one place left, jest one little spot made an' purvided f'r such as me — that's the grave. They'd crowd me out o' there if they could, but they can't, they aint any landlords in the grave. I c'n rest easy there."

(*All are weeping, Alice stroking his hair. Linnie with her head buried in the pillow.*)

Mrs. E. (*rising hastily*). "I'll go an' git y' s'm tea, Jason. I guess that'll hearten you up some." (*Goes out with tearful face. Meets Frank Graham and his wife and all go out together.*)

Edwards (*looks at Reeves*). "You've been a good friend to us all, young man. Y'll never git y'r pay f'r waitin' s' long. I've never felt just right about it. But I couldn't see no way out of it. Allie wouldn't —"

Reeves. "Never mind about that. I'll get my pay." (*To Alice.*) "There's a curious sort of morbid pleasure in denying oneself a pleasure. You know it!"

Linnie (*caressing Edwards*). "Don't give up, poppa. Just see how nice the prairie looks, mebbe the wheat aint *all* spoiled."

Edwards (*after a long pause, brokenly.*) "I'm no account from this time on. I've got through. All I'd want now is t' git back t' the old town where I played. Seems 's if I could jest kinda git where I could hear the sound of water once more an' see the old green hills I'd die more satisfied, someway."

Reeves (*with great eagerness, kneeling*). "Listen to me, father, I'm going to take things in my own hands now. I'm going to make Alice my wife. From this time on, her home is your home. You needn't worry about their future; just enjoy —"

Edwards (*stopping him with a gesture*). "Hold on, young man! I'm sixty years of age. F'r fifty years I've travelled, and I've always paid my way. Up t' this day I've earned every crumb I've eet, every dollar I've spent. I never was beholden to any man before, and I wouldn't be now if,— but don't talk t' me about *enjoyin'*— it aint in me, a pauper!"

Alice (*indignantly*). "You're not a pauper."

Reeves (*rising quickly*). "He's a hero! He has fought heroically. No battle with bayonet and ball can test the courage of a man like this hopeless battle against the injustice of the world, this grinding, endless, ferocious war against hunger and cold."

Alice (*fondly, impulsively*). "Walter, you are — an angel!"

Reeves (*smiling and pressing her cheek against his shoulder*). "A very *militant* angel, I assure you, with an absorbing love for earthly heroes and heroines." (*Bending over Edwards and taking him by the hand.*) "I know how hard it is for a brave soldier to go to the rear. I've heard my father say — he's dead, he was in the Wilderness, as you were, — I've heard him say that men shot down in a charge, used to bind up their wounds and stagger on streaming with blood rather than go to the rear, their eyes blazing from their livid faces, unconquered and unconquerable, and when they weakened and fell, they'd swing their caps and cheer as the column passed on into the smoke of the enemy's cannon." (*Tenderly, kneeling.*) "Old man, you've gone down in a greater and more ferocious battle than the Wilderness. You're old and disabled; let me carry you to the rear. Let me take you back to Derry." (*Enter Mrs. E., with platter.*)

Alice (*pleading*). "Yes, father, you've done your part. You're not to blame. You'll die here — mother, plead with him. Father, I've fought with you, but I can't fight longer. I'm worn out with it all. I've given up."

Edwards (*after a long pause*). "I surrender. I'm beat. I give up, but it hurts, it hurts! I'm like an old broken scythe, hung up, t' rust in the rain; I aint no use to y' now, Jennie! Here's my hand, young man — Walter, my son, take her back t' Boston where she ought t' be, an' take me back t' Derry. I sha'n't be a burden to y' long. I don't s'pose I'm wuth the trouble, but I'd kindo like t' be buried back there. I hate t' die out on this hot prairie with no tree t' be buried under; seems 's if I couldn't rest, an' rest is the sweetest thing in the world f'r a man like me, the *only* thing left — I can't lose that."

Linnie (*throws herself on his knees*). "Oh, poppa, poppa, you make my heart ache so."

Edwards (*stroking her hair*). "I hope you won't have t' suffer as Allie has, little girl."

Reeves (*with deepest earnestness*). "I say you are fallen, but the column has passed on, the battle will yet be won. Courage, you will yet live to see the outposts of the enemy carried, and Linnie will live to see a larger and grander abolition cause, carried to a bloodless Appomattox, the abolition of industrial slavery."

(*Linnie lifts her face.*)

Alice. "Do you think so? *Is* there hope, Walter?"

Reeves. "There is great hope."

Edwards. "If I could believe that, I'd feel easier. If I c'd feel that my children, and my children's children could have a better chance than I've had, I mean without your help or anybody's help,— all I ask is a fair chance — "

Reeves. "That's what I mean. A fair chance for every man — *it's coming!*"

Alice. "Do you think so?"

Reeves (*expanding with enthusiasm*). "I know it. Just as I know spring will come again."

Edwards. "If I could b'lieve that."

Reeves (*in the same tone*). "You can't help believing it, as you live the next five years, the air is already electrical with inquiry. Over us the shadow still hangs, but far in the west a faint, ever-widening crescent of light tells of clear skies beyond. Live for that time, it's worth living for. Strike hands with me. Let me carry your knapsack. Believe in the future — "

Edwards. "I'll try." (*They clasp hands.*)

Alice. "How much you are to us, Walter. You have given us all new life."

Reeves. "I've only begun to be something to you. Now we are ready to begin life together, and they shall rest easy —"

Mrs. Edwards. "Here's y'r tea, Jason."

Edwards (*trying to rise*). "Help me up."

Mrs. Edwards. "Wait a minute. Linnie, bring some water and a towel; Allie, bring that bowl o' broth. Don't try to get up, Jason, till I get some more pillows." (*The women go out.*)

(*Edwards struggles to rise, Reeves puts his arm about his shoulders, as he does so a look of horror passes over the old man's face. He stares at Reeves, at last whispers:*) "My God, I can't move my feet!"

Reeves (*comprehending*). "No, no. Great God, man, that would be too horrible. It's only temporary numbness — "

(*Edwards makes another desperate effort and falls back on his pillow, with set, despairing face, a groan bursts from his lips.*)

"No, no — it's true — *I'm paralyzed!*"

Alice (*re-entering hears, stands for an instant appalled—rushes to his side*). "Oh, it *can't* be true — I — "

Edwards (on impulse to shield). "Sh! Don't tell — them — mother — baby — "

As Alice and Reeves stand horrified, gazing into each other's eyes, Linnie enters dancing, whistling.

Linnie. "And now we'll go back to Boston, won't we, Allie?"

Curtain.

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